

LEO TOLSTOY

*TALES
OF
SEVASTOPOL*



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SEVASTOPOL



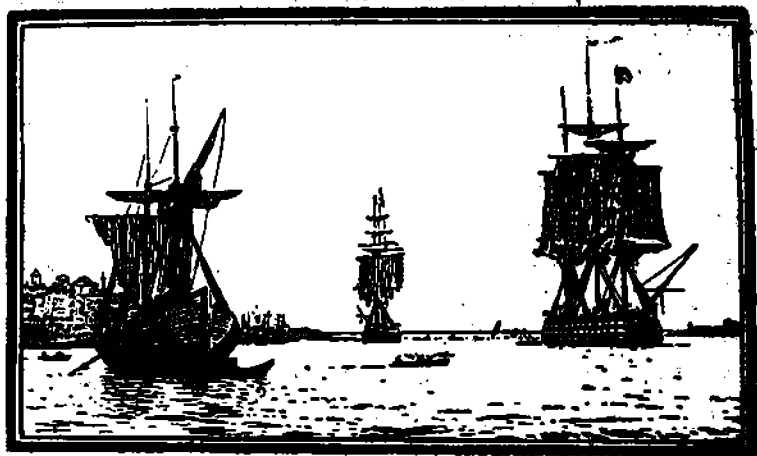
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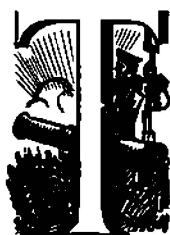
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SEVASTOPOL
IN DECEMBER



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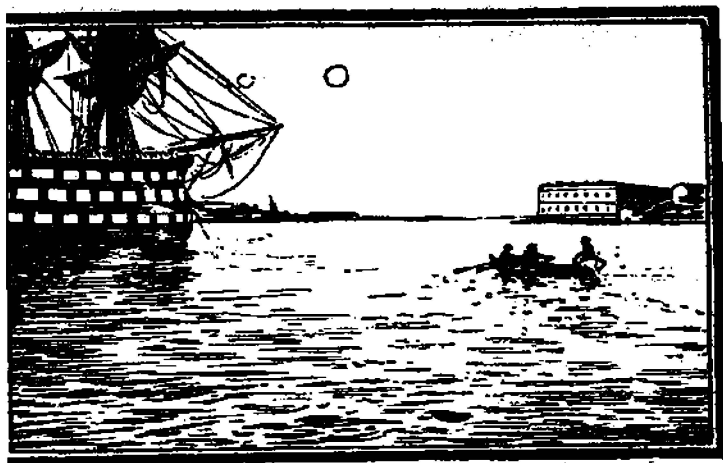
THE GLOW of morning is just beginning to tint the sky over Sapun Hill; the dark blue surface of the sea has already cast off the gloom of night and is waiting for the first ray of the sun to set it sparkling merrily; a cold raw mist is creeping in from the bay; there is no snow—all is black around, but the crisp morning frost pinches your cheeks and makes the ground crunch underfoot; the distant, ceaseless murmur of the sea, drowned at rare intervals by the reverberating boom of cannon in Sevastopol, alone

disturbs the morning calm. From the ships come the distant strokes of eight bells.

On the North Side daytime activities are gradually replacing the tranquillity of night: here with muskets rattling a detachment of soldiers is marching to relieve the guard; there a doctor is hastening to the hospital; a soldier clambers out of his dugout, washes his bronzed face with icy water and, turning to the East now rosy with the dawn, mutters his prayers and rapidly crosses himself; a tall, heavy camel-drawn *majara* goes creaking towards the cemetery to bury the gory corpses with which it is laden almost to the top. You approach the quay—a peculiar smell of coal, manure, dampness and meat strikes you. Thousands of different objects—firewood, meat, gabions, sacks of flour, iron and so forth—lie stacked on the quay; soldiers from different regiments, some carrying sacks and muskets and others without sacks or muskets, crowd the place, smoking, swearing, hauling heavy loads to a steamer which is lying at the quayside with smoke belching from its funnel; boats filled with all sorts of folk—soldiers, sailors, tradesmen and women—arrive and depart.

“Going to the Grafskaya, Your Honour? I’ll take you across!” two or three retired sailors call out, climbing out of the boats to offer you their services.

You choose the one that is nearest to you, step over the partly decayed carcass of a horse that is lying in the mud near the boat, and take your seat at the tiller. You have pushed off from the shore. All around you is the sea, now sparkling in the morning sun. Facing you are an old sailor in a camel-hair coat and a young tow-haired lad, both diligently plying their oars in silence. You gaze at the huge striped hulls of the ships that are scattered far and wide over the bay and at the small boats moving like black dots across the glittering blue expanse: at the handsome town buildings, pink in the rays of the morning



sun, visible on the opposite shore; at the foaming white lines round the boom and the sunken ships with their masts jutting black and forlorn out of the sea; at the enemy fleet looming in the distance against the crystal horizon, and at the eddies of foaming water and dancing brine bubbles caused by the oars. You listen to the measured beat of the oars, to the sound of voices that reach you across the water, and to the majestic boom of cannon fire which, it seems to you, is increasing in intensity in Sevastopol.

The very thought that you are in Sevastopol cannot but fill your soul with a sense of courage and pride and make the blood course faster in your veins.

"Steer past the *Kistentin**, Your Honour," the old sailor will tell you and then turn round to see whether you have given the boat the proper direction—helm to starboard.

* *The Constantine.*

"She's still got all her guns!" the tow-headed boy will remark, looking up at the ship as we pass.

"Sure she has! She's new. Kornilov lived on her," the old sailor remarks, also glancing up at the ship.

"There! Look where it burst!" the boy will exclaim after a long silence, gazing at a small, white, dissolving cloud of smoke that had suddenly appeared over South Bay followed by the sharp sound of an exploding shell.

"That's *him* firing from the new battery today," the old sailor will add, unconcernedly spitting on his hands. "Now Mishka! Put your back into it! Let's get ahead of that barge!" And your boat skims more swiftly over the broad swell of the bay, does indeed overtake the heavy barge which is laden with bales and rowed with uneven stroke by some clumsy soldiers, and noses its way among a swarm of boats of every description moored at the Graftskaya Quay.

The quay teems with a noisy crowd of grey-clad soldiers, sailors in black and motley-clad women. The women are selling white rolls, and Russian peasants behind steaming samovars are crying "*Hot sbeeten!*"* And right there at the quayside rusty cannon balls, shells, grape-shot and iron cannon are lying around. A little further on there is a large open space in which enormous beams, gun carriages and sleeping soldiers are lying; horses, carts, pieces of cannon and green ammunition carts, and stacked muskets are standing; soldiers, sailors, officers, women, children and tradespeople are streaming past; carts laden with hay, sacks or barrels clatter through; now and again a Cossack and an officer pass on horseback, or a general rolls past in a droshky. The street on the right is blocked by a barricade with small guns peeping through the embrasures, and a sailor smoking a pipe is sitting beside them. On the left stands a handsome

* A sweet spiced beverage.

building with Roman numerals over its portico, and outside soldiers with blood-stained stretchers are waiting—the unpleasant signs of a military camp are visible everywhere. Your first impressions will certainly be most unpleasant: a strange mixture of camp and city life, of a beautiful town and a filthy bivouac, which far from being beautiful seems to be in a shocking state of disorder; it even seems as though everybody is frightened and is hurrying about aimlessly, not knowing what to do. But look more closely into the faces of the people moving around you and you will see something quite different. Glance, for instance, at this little *furschtadt* soldier leading three horses to be watered and humming a tune with such unconcern that you feel sure that not only will he keep his bearings in this motley throng, which does not even exist for him, but will perform his duty whatever it may be—water horses or haul guns—just as calmly, confidently and imperturbably as if it were all happening in Tula, say, or in Saransk. You see the same expression on the face of the officer who is strolling past wearing spotlessly white gloves; on the face of the sailor who is smoking his pipe at the barricade, on the faces of the soldiers who are waiting with their stretchers in the portico of the former Assembly Hall, and on the face of the young girl who is crossing the street, stepping daintily from stone to stone so as not to stain the hem of her pink frock.

Yes, you will certainly feel disappointed on your first visit to Sevastopol. You will scan the faces of the people in vain for signs of anxiety or consternation, or even of enthusiasm, readiness to die or grim determination—you will find nothing of the kind. You will see about you ordinary people going about their ordinary business and you may want to reproach yourself for having been overenthusiastic, and begin to doubt the accuracy of the picture of the heroism of the defenders of Sevastopol you had formed in your mind from the tales and

descriptions and sights and sounds you had heard and seen on the North Side. But before you allow such doubts to beset you go to the bastions, see the defenders of Sevastopol at the places where they are defending it, or, better still, go into the building that had once been the Assembly Hall, right across the street, where the soldiers are standing with their stretchers; there you will see the defenders of Sevastopol, you will see sights ghastly and sad, grand and amusing, but amazing and exalting.

You enter the large room of the Assembly Hall. No sooner do you open the door than you are assailed by the sight and smell of forty or fifty patients—amputation cases and very severely wounded—some lying in cots, but most of them on the floor. Do not heed the feeling that keeps you rooted on the threshold—it is an evil feeling—go right ahead, and do not feel ashamed of seeming to have come to *look* at the sufferers, do not be ashamed to go up and talk to them: the unfortunate like to see a compassionate human face, they like to talk about their sufferings and to hear words of kindness and sympathy. You go down between the beds and look for a face that is less stern and pain-stricken, to whom you would dare go up and talk.

"Where are you wounded?" you inquire hesitantly and timidly of a gaunt old soldier who has been watching you from his cot with kindly eyes that seemed to invite you to go up to him. I say "inquire timidly," because the sight of suffering for some reason evokes not only deep sympathy, but also fear of hurting the sufferer, and a profound respect for him.

"In the leg," he answers; but you notice from the folds of his blanket that one of his legs has been amputated up to the thigh. "I'm alright now, thank God," he adds, "I'm waiting for my discharge."

"Were you wounded long ago?"

"Nigh on six weeks ago, Your Honour."

"Well, does it hurt you now?"



"No, it doesn't hurt any more. It's alright. Only I feel as if my calf aches when the weather's bad; otherwise it's alright."

"How did you come to be wounded?"

"It was in the 5th *Baschon*, Your Honour, during the first bombardment. I had trained my gun and was just going to the next embrasure, when he hit me in the leg. I felt as if I had tumbled down a hole. I looked and found my leg was gone."

"Didn't you feel any pain at the first moment?"

"No. I didn't. I only felt as if something hot had whipped my leg."

"Well, and afterwards?"

"It was not so bad afterwards, either, except when they started pulling the skin over. It was pretty bad then. The main thing's *not to think a lot*, Your Honour. When you don't think it's alright. Most trouble comes because a man thinks."

At this moment a woman in a striped grey dress and black kerchief comes up to you and joins in the conversation. She tells

you about the sailor, about his sufferings, about the desperate state he had been in for four months; about how, when he was wounded, he had stopped the stretcher-bearers to watch our battery fire a salvo, and about how the Grand Dukes had spoken to him and had given him twenty-five rubles, and how he had told them he wanted to return to the bastion to instruct the young men in case he would not be able to go into action again. The woman tells you this all in one breath, looking at you and then at the sailor, who turns away, and appearing not to hear what she is saying, picks a piece of lint off his pillow, while her eyes shine with rapture.

"She's my wife, Your Honour!" the sailor says in an apologetic tone as if to say: "You must excuse her. You know what women are with their foolish talk."

You begin to understand the defenders of Sevastopol and for some reason feel conscious-stricken in this man's presence. You feel you want to say so much to express your sympathy and admiration, but you cannot find the words, or find the words that come to your mind inadequate; and you bow your head in silence before this man's mute, unconscious greatness and fortitude, before the embarrassment he displays at his own merits.

"Well, may God grant you a speedy recovery," you say to him and go on to another patient, who is lying on the floor and seems to be waiting for death in excruciating agony.

He is fair-haired, and his face is bloated and pale. He is lying on his back, his left arm is thrown back in a pose expressing acute suffering. His breath whistles laboriously through his parched open mouth, his leaden blue eyes are rolled upward and the stump of his bandaged right arm shows from under the crumpled blanket. The strong odour of decaying flesh strikes you more strongly than ever, and the consuming fever that is coursing through the patient's limbs seems to have penetrated your own.

"Is he unconscious?" you ask the woman who has followed you, looking at you as tenderly as if you were one who was dear to her.

"No, he can still hear," she answers, and adds in a whisper: "But he's in a very bad way. I gave him some tea today—one must take pity even if he is a stranger—but he hardly drank any."

"How do you feel?" you ask him.

The wounded man's eyes roll at the sound of your voice, but he does not see or understand you.

"My heart's burning."

A little farther on you see an old soldier who is changing his shirt. His face and body are of a brownish hue, and he is as gaunt as a skeleton. One of his arms is missing; it was amputated at the shoulder. He sits up well; he has recovered; but his lifeless, lacklustre eyes, his frightfully emaciated body and the deep furrows on his face show that the best part of this poor creature's life has been worn away by suffering.

On the other side, in a cot, you see a woman's delicate suffering face, deathly pale, with the flush of fever in her cheeks.

"That's the wife of one of our sailors," your guide will inform you. "A shell hit her in the leg on the 5th, while she was taking her husband's dinner to the bastion."

"Was it amputated?"

"Yes, right above the knee."

And now, if your nerves are strong enough, pass through the door on your left, into the room where wounds are dressed and operations are performed. There you will see surgeons with their arms bespattered with blood up to the elbows, their faces pale and stern, engaged in something at a cot upon which a wounded man is lying under the influence of chloroform. His eyes are wide open and he is muttering incoherently as if in

delirium, sometimes uttering simple words of endearment. The surgeons are engaged in the revolting but beneficent task of amputating a limb. You see the sharp curved knife pierce the white, healthy flesh; you hear the wounded man suddenly come to with a frightful, bloodcurdling scream and a volley of oaths, and you see the feldsher throw the amputated arm into a corner; you see in another part of the room another unfortunate lying on a stretcher and, watching the operation being performed on his comrade, he writhes and moans, not so much from physical pain as from the mental torture of anticipation. You will witness awful, heart-rending scenes; you will see war not as a splendid array of troops in beautiful formation, with music and the beating of drums, fluttering colours and generals on prancing steeds, but war in its true aspect—blood, suffering and death. . . .

On leaving this house of pain you will certainly experience a feeling of relief, you will take deep breaths of the fresh air and rejoice in the consciousness of your own sound health; but the contemplation of those sufferings will make you aware of your own insignificance, and you will proceed calmly and unhesitatingly to the bastion.

“What are the sufferings and death of an insignificant worm like myself compared with so many deaths and so much suffering?” But the sight of the clear sky, the brilliant sun, the beautiful town, the open church and the throngs of military men moving in all directions will soon restore you to your normal light-heartedness, occupation with petty cares and absorption with the present alone.

On your way you may meet a funeral procession leaving the church, carrying an officer to his grave in a pink coffin, with fluttering gonfalons and a band; or perhaps the sounds of firing from the bastions will reach your ears; but this will not carry you back to your previous thoughts; the funeral will

appear to you as a very beautiful military pageant, the sounds as beautiful martial music, and you will associate neither the pageant nor the sounds with vivid thoughts of suffering and death identified with yourself as you did at the dressing station.

After passing the church and the barricade, you will enter the most animated section of the town. On both sides of the street the shop signs and taverns, the tradesmen, women in bonnets and kerchiefs and dapper officers—all testify to the staunchness, self-confidence and sense of security of the inhabitants.

If you want to hear what the sailors and officers are saying, step into the tavern on the right: they are no doubt already relating stories about the happenings of the night before, about the wench Fenia, about the battle on the 24th; about how dear and badly served the cutlets are, and about how such and such a comrade was killed.

"The devil take it! Things have been rotten at our place today!" a fair-haired, beardless little naval officer in a knitted green scarf will boom in a deep bass.

"Where's your place?" another asks him.

"At the 4th Bastion," the young officer replies, and at the mention of the words "4th Bastion," you will regard the fair-haired little officer with greater interest and with even a certain amount of awe. His exaggerated air of nonchalance, his gesticulations, his loud voice and laughter, which you had taken as mere swagger, now appear to you as that devil-may-care spirit which very young people acquire nowadays, after encountering danger. Nevertheless, you expect him to go on saying that things were rotten on the 4th Bastion because of the shells and bullets; but nothing of the kind! It was rotten because of the mud! "You couldn't get to the battery," he will say, pointing to his boots that are coated up to the knees with mud. "One of my best gunners was killed today—got nicked clean through

the forehead," another will say. "Who was that? Mityukhin?" "No.... Are you going to bring me those veal cutlets today? Canaille!"—this is to the waiter.... "No, not Mityukhin, Abrosimov. Splendid fellow he was. Took part in six sorties."

At another corner of the table, with some plates of cutlets and peas and a bottle of sour Crimean wine dubbed "Bordeaux" before them, sit two infantry officers. One, a young man with a red collar to his greatcoat and two stars on his shoulder straps, is telling the other, a man of advanced age, with a black collar and without stars, about the battle of Alma. The first is already slightly tipsy, and from the pauses he makes in telling his story, the hesitant look in his eyes expressing doubt as to whether he is being believed or not, and chiefly, the fact that the part he had played in the whole business seems to have been so exceedingly important and that the scenes he describes are so terrifying, you get the impression that he is straying very far from the strict truth. But you are not interested in these stories, which you will hear repeated for a long time to come in every part of Russia. You are eager to get to the bastions, to the 4th, to be exact, about which you have been told so much, and in so many different ways. When anyone says that he has been on the 4th Bastion he invariably says it with exceptional pleasure and pride; when anyone says: "I am going to the 4th Bastion," you are sure to note either a slight tremor of excitement in his voice or an exaggerated tone of indifference; if anyone wants to chaff another he says: "You ought to be sent to the 4th Bastion"; and when you meet a man carried on stretcher and ask: "Where from?" in most cases the answer will be: "From the 4th Bastion." Actually, there are two totally different opinions about this frightful bastion: the one held by those who have never been there and who are convinced that the 4th Bastion holds out certain death for everybody who goes there, and the one held by those who live



there, like the fair-haired midshipman, and who, when speaking about the 4th Bastion, will only tell you whether it is dry or muddy there, whether it is warm or cold in the dugouts, and so on.

During the half hour you have spent in the tavern the weather has changed. The mist which had spread over the sea has gathered into grey, bleak, humid clouds and has shut out the sun. Rain and sleet is falling in a cold, dreary drizzle, wetting the roofs, the sidewalks and the soldiers' greatcoats. . . .

Leaving one more barricade behind, you pass through a gate, turn to the right and walk up a wide street. The houses beyond this barricade, on both sides of the street, are uninhabited; there are no signboards; the doors are boarded up; the windows are broken; in one house a corner has been shot away, in another the roof is wrecked. The buildings look like aged veterans who have experienced hardship and want, and they seem to look down upon you with pride and a little bit of contempt.

On your way you stumble over cannon balls and into water-filled pits made in the rocky soil by shells. You meet and overtake detachments of soldiers, Cossacks and officers. Now and then you meet a woman or a child, but the woman does not wear a bonnet; she is a sailor's wife, in an old winter coat and soldier's boots. Proceeding further up the street and then down a gentle slope, you no longer see any houses around you; instead there are strange heaps of rubble, planks, clay, logs and stones. Ahead of you, on a steep hill, looms a dark, muddy space intersected by ditches; and this thing ahead of you is the 4th Bastion.... Here you meet fewer people, and no women at all; the soldiers walk past briskly, the road is sprinkled with blood and you are certain to see four soldiers carrying a stretcher, and on the stretcher a sallow face and a bloodstained army coat. If you should ask: "Where is he wounded?" the stretcher-bearers will reply angrily, without looking at you, that he has been hit in the leg or arm—if the wound is slight; or they will pass on in grim silence if no head is visible on the stretcher and the man they are carrying is dead or severely wounded.

The shriek of a cannon ball or a shell flying close by will evoke an unpleasant sensation as you ascend the hill. You will suddenly understand, and quite differently this time, the meaning of the sounds of firing you had heard in town. Some sweet and gentle memory will flash through your mind; you will begin to think more about yourself than about your observations; you will begin to pay less attention to your surroundings, and a nasty feeling of irresolution will possess you. But in spite of the odious little voice that you suddenly hear within you, at the sight of danger, and especially when you see a soldier swinging his arms, slither downhill through the liquid mud and trot past you with a laugh, you bid that voice be silent, instinctively throw out your chest, raise your head higher and climb the

slippery, clayey hill. You have barely climbed a little way, however, when *Stutzer* bullets begin to whiz through the air both to the right and the left, and you will perhaps ask yourself whether it would not be better to go along the trench that winds parallel with the road. But that trench is filled knee-deep with liquid, yellow, stinking mud, and you will certainly prefer the road up the hill, the more so that you see *everybody going by the road*. After proceeding for about two hundred paces you come to a shell-pitted, muddy space, surrounded by gabions, banks, powder magazines, platforms and dugouts, on the roofs of which are posted big cast-iron cannon and orderly piles of cannon balls. They all seem to be jumbled together without rhyme or reason. A group of sailors are lounging about on the battery; in the middle of this space a shattered cannon lies half-buried in the mud; an infantryman, carrying a musket, is wading across the battery, dragging his feet out of the mud with difficulty. The whole place is littered with fragments of shells, unexploded shells, cannon balls, and camp garbage, all immersed in a sea of sticky mud. You hear the thud of a cannon ball, apparently quite close to you; bullets seem to be flying all around, emitting different sounds—some droning like bees, others, the swift ones, flying past with a whistle, or a “ping” like that emitted by the string of a musical instrument. You hear the terrific roar of a cannon shot which stuns everybody and sounds so terrible to you.

“So this is the 4th Bastion! This is the awful, truly dreadful place!” you think to yourself; and you are conscious of a tiny feeling of pride and a big feeling of suppressed fear. But you will be disappointed. You have not yet arrived at the 4th Bastion. This is the Yazonovsky Redoubt—a comparatively safe place, and not at all terrifying. To get to the 4th Bastion you must turn to the right and make your way along that narrow trench through which an infantryman has just gone.

crouching low. In this trench you may meet more stretchers, a sailor, soldiers with spades: you will see mine fuses, dugouts built in the mud into which only two men can crawl; and there you will see the scouts from the Black Sea battalions changing their footwear, eating, smoking pipes and living their various lives; and everywhere the same stinking mud, camp garbage and fragments of iron of every shape and size. Another three-hundred paces will bring you to another battery, a small, shell-pitted square encumbered with gabions, earth works, guns mounted on platforms, and encircled by ramparts. You may see four or five sailors playing cards under cover of the breastwork, and a naval officer who, recognizing you as an interested newcomer, will be glad to show you round and point out everything of interest to you. This officer rolls his yellow cigarette as he sits on his cannon, or passes from one embrasure to another, so calmly and speaks to you with so little affectation that in spite of the bullets whizzing about you with increasing frequency, you calm yourself, question him and listen to what he tells you with the closest attention. This officer will tell you—but only if you ask him—about the bombardment that took place on the 5th, how only one gun was left in action and only eight of his men survived, but for all that he blazed away with all his guns on the morning of the 6th. He will tell you how, on the 5th, a shell dropped on a sailors' dugout and laid out eleven men; he will point through an embrasure to the enemy trenches, which here are no more than two hundred or three hundred feet away. There is one thing I am afraid of, however: when you poke your head through the embrasure to peer at the enemy, you will not see anything owing to the effect the whizzing bullets have upon you; but if you do see anything, you will be surprised to find that the white rocky wall which is so close to you, and from which little white puffs are bursting, is the enemy—he, as the soldiers and sailors call him.

It is very probable that the naval officer, out of bravado, or simply for fun, will want to do a little shooting for your benefit. "Send the bombardier and crew to this gun!" and fourteen sailors will come filing out merrily: one thrusting his pipe into his pocket, another cramming the remainder of his rusk into his mouth, and mounting the platform, clattering their hob-nailed boots, will start loading the gun. Peer into the faces of these men, note their bearing and movements: every wrinkle on those tanned, broad faces, every muscle, the breadth of those shoulders, the thickness of those legs encased in those enormous top boots, every movement, cool, unhurried and deliberate, reveal the principal qualities that constitute the strength of the Russians—simplicity and stubbornness.

Suddenly there is a terrific roar which sends a shock not only through your ears, but through your whole body and makes you tremble from head to foot. The next thing you hear is the receding shriek of a shell, and a thick cloud of gunpowder smoke envelops you, the platform and the black figures of the sailors moving about on it. You will hear the sailors making all sorts of comments about this shot, and you will see their excitement, and a display of feeling which, perhaps, you had not expected—rage, a thirst for vengeance upon the enemy with which the heart of every man is filled. "Got him right through the *embrazhoor*; we killed two of 'em I think... Look! They're being taken away!" the men exclaim gleefully. "He'll get mad now and send one over here in a minute," someone will say; and indeed, a few moments later you will see a flash of lightning and a cloud of smoke; the sentinel standing on the breastwork will bark: "Can-n-non!" and a ball will fly past you, strike the ground with a plop and throw up a fountain of mud and stones. The Battery Commander will be annoyed at this shot and will order another and a third gun to be loaded. The enemy will retaliate and you will become thrilled with interest.

ing emotions, and see and hear interesting things. Again the sentinel will bark: "Cannon!" and again you will hear the shriek and thud and see a fountain of mud shoot up. He may cry out: "Mortar!" and you will hear a regular and rather pleasant droning that is difficult to associate with anything terrifying, the droning of a shell approaching with gathering speed, and then you will see a black ball, and hear a heavy thud as it strikes the ground with the resounding crash of an explosion. Splinters will fly around, shrieking and whistling; stones will go hurtling through the air, and you will be spattered with mud: and all the while you will be conscious of a mixed feeling of pleasure and fear. At the moment, as you are convinced, the shell is flying at you, you feel certain that it is going to kill you; but your pride sustains you, and nobody sees the knife that is cutting at your heart. But when the shell has flown past without touching you, you revive at once, and a joyful, inexpressibly pleasant feeling takes possession of you, though only for an instant, and you find a peculiar charm in danger, in this game of life and death; you want a cannon or shell to drop closer and closer to you. But the sentinel once again cries out "Mortar!" in his loud gruff voice and again there is a shriek, a thud and an explosion; but mingled with this sound you are astonished to hear the groan of a human being. You reach the wounded man just as a stretcher is brought to him. Lying in mud and blood, he presents a strange, almost inhuman appearance. Part of his chest has been torn away. In the first few moments his muddy face betrays only fear and the seemingly feigned and premature expression of suffering so often seen in a man in his condition; but when the stretcher is brought up and he gets into it himself and lies down on his uninjured side, this expression gives way to one of exaltation; his eyes flash, his teeth are clenched, he raises his head with an effort, and when he is lifted, he stops the stretcher-bearers and turning to

his comrades he says in a strained and trembling voice: "Farewell, brothers!" He wants to say something more; you see that he is trying to express some tender thought, but he can only repeat: "Farewell, brothers." A sailor comrade goes up to him, puts his cap on his head—the wounded man raising his head to enable him to do so—and swinging his arms he returns calm and unmoved to his gun.

"That's how we lose seven or eight men a day," the naval officer tells you in reply to the look of horror on your face. Yawning, he rolls another yellow cigarette. . . .

So now you have seen the defenders of Sevastopol in action, and you go back without, for some reason, paying any heed to the cannon balls and bullets that continue to whiz overhead all the way to the ruined theatre—striding along in a serene and exalted mood. The chief thing is the happy conviction that you carry away with you—the conviction that Sevastopol cannot be taken, and not only that it cannot be taken, but that it is impossible to shake the spirit of the Russian people anywhere—and you have seen this impossibility not in the numerous traverses, breastworks and winding trenches, mines, and guns piled one upon the other without rhyme or reason, as it seemed to you, but in the eyes, the speech, the mannerisms, and in what is termed the spirit of the defenders of Sevastopol. What they are doing, they are doing simply and so effortlessly that you are convinced that they are capable of doing a hundred times more . . . they can do anything. You realize that the feeling that prompts their actions is not that of pettiness, ambition or forgetfulness which prompted you, but another feeling, one far more compelling, which had made of them the kind of men who are capable of living calmly under a hail of shot and shell, with a hundred chances of death to the one that all men are subject to, and living so in conditions of constant toil, vigilance and

filth. Men cannot endure such awful conditions for the sake of a Cross or a title, or under threat of punishment: some other, more exalted, reason must prompt them. Only now are the tales of the early days of the siege of Sevastopol—when there were no fortifications, no troops, and no physical possibility of holding it and still there was not the slightest doubt that it would not be surrendered to the enemy—the days when Kornilov, that hero worthy of ancient Greece, said during an inspection of his forces: “We’ll die, lads, but we won’t surrender Sevastopol!” and our Russians, never phrasemongers, replied: “We’ll die! Hurrah!”—only now have the tales of those days of Sevastopol ceased to be just so many beautiful historical legends for you: they have become authentic, a fact. You will clearly understand, picture to yourself, the people you have just seen, those heroes who in those stern days did not lose heart but became even more exalted in spirit and gladly prepared to die not for a town, but for their motherland. This epic of Sevastopol, the hero of which was the Russian people, will leave its deep impress on Russia for a long time to come. . . .

Dusk is falling. The setting sun emerges from the grey clouds that hide the sky and suddenly splashes its crimson rays over the purple clouds, over the greenish surface of the sea dotted with ships and boats rocked by the broad even swell, the white buildings of the town, and the people moving about its streets. The strains of an old waltz which a regimental band is playing on the boulevard float over the waters to the weird accompaniment of the cannonade from the bastions.

Sevastopol

April 25, 1855.

SEVASTOPOL *IN MAY*





SEVASTOPOL IN MAY

1

SIX MONTHS have elapsed since the first cannon-ball went shrieking from the Sevastopol bastions and raked up the earth in the enemy positions; and since then thousands of shells, cannon-balls and bullets have flown unceasingly from the bastions to the trenches and from the trenches to the bastions, and the Angel of Death has hovered unceasingly over both.

During this time thousands of human ambitions have been frustrated, thousands more have been gratified, have swelled,

and thousands have been soothed in the arms of death. How many Stars have been put on, how many have been discarded, how many Orders of Anna and Vladimir have been received, and how many pink coffins and linen pallis have been made! And still the bastions emit the same sounds, and on clear evenings the French still—with the same involuntary trepidation and superstitious fear—gaze from their camp at the black, shell-pitted earth of Sevastopol's bastions, at the black moving figures of our sailors, and count the embrasures angrily bristling with cannon; and the petty officer on the signal tower still trains his telescope on the motley figures of the French, on their batteries, tents and columns moving up Green Hill, and on the little puffs of smoke that shoot up from their trenches; and heterogeneous crowds of people prompted by still more heterogeneous impulses still keep streaming towards this fatal spot from every part of the globe.

But the problem which the diplomats have failed to solve is being still less successfully solved by gunpowder and blood.

A strange thought often occurs to me: what if one belligerent side were to suggest to the other that each should discharge a soldier from its army? This desire may seem strange, but why not try it? Then a second soldier could be discharged and later a third, a fourth, etc., until only one soldier remains in each army (assuming that the two armies were equal in strength and that quantity is transformed into quality). Then, if really complicated political problems between the rational representatives of rational beings must be solved by fighting, let the two soldiers fight it out—one laying siege to the town, and the other defending it.

This argument looks paradoxical, but it is a good one, nevertheless. Indeed, what difference would there be between one Russian fighting one representative of the allies, and, say, 80.000 fighting 80.000? Why not 135.000 against 135.000? Or

20,000 against 20,000? Or 20 against 20? Why not one against one? One idea is no more illogical than the other. On the contrary, the latter is far more logical because it is more humane. One of two things: either war is madness, or, if men engage in this madness, they are certainly not the rational beings that we for some reason think they are.

On the boulevard of the besieged town of Sevastopol, near the pavilion, a regimental band was playing, and crowds of military men and women were promenading along the paths in a holiday mood. The brilliant spring sun had risen over the English positions, had passed on to the bastions, then over the city and the Nikolayevsky Barracks, and was now shedding its joyous rays upon all alike, descending to the distant blue sea that was gently heaving with a silvery glitter.

Drawing on his neat, though not perfectly white gloves, a tall, slightly round-shouldered officer passed through the wicket gate of one of the small seamen's cottages that lined the left side of Morskaya Street, and gazing pensively at the ground, ascended the hill towards the boulevard. The expression on the officer's plain face with its low forehead betrayed a man of dull intellect but, withal, of common sense, honesty and decency. He was rather gawky in appearance—long-legged, awkward and somewhat timid in his movements. He wore a cap still comparatively new, a thin army coat of a strange purplish hue, from under which peeped a gold watch chain, pantaloons with footstraps, and calfskin boots, spotless and shining, although rather down at heel; but not so much from his dress, which was rather unusual for an infantry officer, as from his general appearance, the trained military eye could at once see that he was not quite an ordinary infantry officer, but some-

thing higher. He might have been taken for a German were it not for his features, which were purely Russian, or an adjutant, or a regimental quartermaster (but then he would be wearing spurs), or an officer temporarily transferred from the cavalry, or from the Guards, perhaps, for the duration of war. In fact, he had been just transferred from the cavalry, and as he was making his way uphill towards the boulevard he was thinking about a letter he had just received from a former comrade in the service, now retired, a landowner in T. Gubernia, and from his wife, pale, blue-eyed Natasha, a great friend of his. He recalled a part of the letter in which his comrade wrote:

"As soon as the *L'Invalide* arrives, *Poopsie* (that was how the retired Uhlan called his wife) dashes headlong into the hall, grabs the paper and rushes off with it to the *ess** in the *arbour*, or to the *drawing room* (do you remember how many jolly winter evenings we spent there when your regiment was stationed in our town?) and devours the news about *your* feats with such gusto, you can't imagine! She often talks about you: 'Take Mikhailov,' she says, 'there's a *darling* for you—won't I just kiss him when I see him!—he is *fighting in the bastions* and will certainly get the St. George's Cross, and they'll write about him in the papers!' etc., etc., so that I am positively becoming jealous." In another part he writes: "The papers get here awfully late, and although plenty of news goes around by word of mouth, you can't believe it all. Your acquaintances, the *young musical ladies*, for example, told us yesterday that our Cossacks have already captured Napoleon and that he has been sent to St. Petersburg, but you can imagine how much of this I believe. An arrival from St. Petersburg (the Minister's aide for special assignments and a most charming fellow—now that there is hardly anybody in town, you can't imagine what a *risource* he is to us), told us as an absolute fact that we have

A rustic seat shaped like the letter S.—*Tr.*



captured Eupatoria and have thus cut the French communications with Balaclava, and that in this we lost 200 men killed whereas the French lost about 15,000. My wife was so thrilled by this that she *caroused* all night long, and she says that she has a presentiment that you took part in this action and distinguished yourself. . . .”

Notwithstanding the words and phrases which I have deliberately underscored, and the whole tone of the letter, from which the supercilious reader has probably formed a true and unfavourable opinion regarding the respectability of down-at-heel Lieutenant-Captain Mikhailov, of his comrade who writes *risource* and has queer ideas about geography, and of his pale-faced friend in the *ess* (he might even and not without good cause, picture this Natasha to himself with dirty fingernails), and, in general, of the whole idle, squalid provincial society he loathed so much,—notwithstanding this, Lieutenant-Captain Mikhailov recalled with inexpressibly mournful pleasure his pale-faced *provincial* friend, and how he used to sit with her in the arbour and discuss *emotions*. He recalled his kindly Uhlan comrade and

how angry he got when he lost while playing a game in the study at a kopeck a point; and how his wife had laughed at him; he recalled their friendship (perhaps he thought that there was something more than friendship on the part of the pale-faced friend); these people together with their surroundings flashed through his mind in wonderfully tender and joyously rosy hues, and smiling at his recollections, he touched the pocket in which the *dear* letter lay. These recollections were particularly sweet for Lieutenant-Captain Mikhailov because the set in which he now moved in the infantry regiment was much inferior to the one he had known when he was a cavalry officer and a lady's man, well received in all the homes of the town of T.

The set in which he had been so much superior to the present one that when, in moments of candour, he told his comrades in the infantry that he had owned a carriage, had danced at the Governor's balls and had played cards with a general, they listened to him rather sceptically but did not contradict or argue with him—as much as to say: “let him talk,” and that if he did not openly express contempt for his comrades' carousals—their vodka-drinking and gambling for 5-ruble stakes—and for their crudeness in general, it was due to his extraordinary gentle disposition, good nature and common sense.

From these recollections Lieutenant-Captain Mikhailov's thoughts involuntarily passed on to dreams and hopes. “How surprised and glad Natasha will be,” he mused as he strode down a narrow lane in his down-at-heel boots, “when she reads in the *L'Invalide* that I led the charge against the cannon and received the St. George's Cross. I'm due for promotion to full Captain on the old recommendation, and it is quite possible for me to become a Major this year by right of seniority, since so many officers have been killed and most likely a lot more will be killed before the war is over. Then there'll be another action and, as one who has distinguished himself, I'll be given a regi-



ment.... Lieutenant-Colonel... the order of Anna round my neck.... Colonel...." He was already a General, and graciously honouring Natasha, the widow of his comrade, who, as he dreamed, will have died by then, with a visit, when his thoughts were interrupted by a burst of music from the boulevard and the crowds that came into view, and he found himself on the boulevard, the same insignificant, awkward and timid Lieutenant-Captain of Infantry that he had been before.

He first approached the pavilion near which stood the musicians, for whom, for the want of music stands, soldiers of the same regiment were holding open the music scores, and around whom a ring was formed of army clerks, cadets, nursemaids with their charges and officers in *threadbare* greatcoats, who were staring rather than listening. Around the pavilion mainly naval officers, aides-de-camp and army officers in white gloves and new greatcoats were standing, sitting or strolling. Promenading along the central avenue were all sorts of officers and all sorts of women, a few of the latter wearing bonnets, most wearing kerchiefs (some wearing neither bonnets nor kerchiefs), but none of them old—all were young. Below, in the shady avenue, fragrant with white acacias, isolated groups were sitting or walking.

No one seemed to be particularly glad to meet Lieutenant-Captain Mikhailov on the boulevard, except, perhaps, for Captain Obzhogov and Ensign Suslikov of his own regiment, who ardently shook hands with him; but the former wore camel-hair trousers, had no gloves, his greatcoat was shabby and his face was red and perspiring; while the latter talked so loudly and bore himself with so little dignity, that Mikhailov felt ashamed to be seen walking with them, especially by the officers in white gloves, with one of whom—an adjutant—he was on bowing terms, and with another—a Staff officer—he could have been on

bowing terms since they had met twice before in the home of a mutual acquaintance.

Besides, where was the fun of walking with Messieurs Obzhogov and Suslikov when he saw and shook hands with them at least six times a day? It was not for this that he had come to *hear the music*.

He would have liked to saunter up to the aide-de-camp with whom he was on bowing terms and to chat with those gentlemen, not because he wanted to show off before Captain Obzhogov, Ensign Suslikov, Lieutenant Pishtetski and the rest, but simply because they were pleasant people and, being in the know, would be able to tell him the news. . . . But why is Lieutenant-Captain Mikhailov so hesitant and fearful of approaching them? "What if they don't return my bow?" he thinks, "or what if they bow but go on talking as if I were not there? Or what if they go off altogether and leave me standing alone among the *aristocrats*?" The word *aristocrats* (meaning the élite of any and every class) has lately become quite popular in Russia (where this should not have happened, one would think) and has spread to every part of the country and to every class of society to which vanity has spread (are there any times or circumstances when this wretched passion does not spread?)—among the merchant class, government officials, clerks and army officers, in Saratov, Mamadyshi and Vinnitsa, wherever people are to be found. And since there are plenty of people in the besieged town of Sevastopol, it follows that there is plenty of vanity, *i.e.*, *aristocrats*, in spite of the fact that death hovers unceasingly over the head of both *aristocrats* and *non-aristocrats*. To Captain Obzhogov, Lieutenant-Captain Mikhailov was an *aristocrat*, because his coat and gloves were clean, and he could not bear him for it, although he respected him a little; and to Lieutenant-Captain Mikhailov, adjutant Kalugin was an *aristocrat*, because he was an adjutant, and he addressed the other

adjutants in the familiar "thou," and he was therefore not very well disposed towards him, although he feared him. To adjutant Kalugin, Count Nordov was an *aristocrat*, and he always abused and despised him in his heart of hearts for being an aide-de-camp. It's an awful word is *aristocrat*. Why does Sub-Lieutenant Zobov laugh sardonically when passing a comrade who is sitting with a Staff officer? To show that although he is not an *aristocrat*, he is quite as good as they are. Why does the Staff-officer speak in that low drawl? To show his companion that he is an *aristocrat*, and a very gracious one to be seen speaking with a sub-lieutenant. Why does the cadet swing his arms and wink as he follows a lady whom he had never seen before and whom he would never dream of accosting? To show the officers that although he takes his cap off to them, he is nonetheless an *aristocrat*, and feels absolutely topping. Why did the artillery captain bully that good-natured orderly? To show all and sundry that he fawns upon no one and has no use for *aristocrats*, etc., etc.

Vanity, vanity, all is vanity—even on the brink of the grave and among people ready to die for a lofty ideal. Vanity! It must be the characteristic feature and the specific disease of our times. Why is it that this passion was unheard of among people in former times, like smallpox, or cholera? Why is it that in our age we have only three types of people: one that regards vanity as an existing fact and therefore just, and voluntarily submit to it; another that regards it as an unfortunate but unavoidable condition; and a third which unconsciously and slavishly allow their actions to be influenced by it? Why did Homer and Shakespeare speak about love, glory and suffering, while the literature of our age is nothing but an endless tale of "Snobs" and "Vanity"?

Twice Lieutenant-Captain Mikhailov irresolutely strolled past the group of *his aristocrats*, but the third time, pulling himself together, he approached them. The group consisted of

four officers: Adjutant Kalugin, with whom Mikhailov was acquainted; Adjutant Prince Galtsin, who was even a bit of an aristocrat to Kalugin; Lieutenant-Colonel Neferdov, one of the so-called "122" men of high society who had rejoined the service, prompted partly by patriotism, partly by ambition, but chiefly because *everybody* was doing it—an old Moscow clubman bachelor who had here attached himself to the discontented party which did nothing, understood nothing and criticized every order issued by the higher authorities; and Cavalry-Captain Praskukhin, also one of the "122" heroes. Luckily for Mikhailov, Kalugin happened to be in an excellent mood (the General had only just spoken to him very confidentially, and Prince Galtsin, who had arrived from St. Petersburg, was staying with him), and therefore saw nothing derogatory to his dignity in shaking hands with Lieutenant-Captain Mikhailov. Praskukhin, however, felt otherwise, notwithstanding the fact that he had frequently met Mikhailov on the bastion, had often drunk his wine and vodka and even owed him twelve rubles and fifty kopecks which he had lost to him at cards. Not being so well acquainted with Prince Galtsin, he did not care to reveal to him his acquaintance with an ordinary infantry lieutenant-captain and so he acknowledged his greeting with a slight bow.

"Well, Captain," said Kalugin to Mikhailov, "when shall we be on the bastion again? Do you remember us meeting at the Schwartz Redoubt? It was rather hot there, what?"

"Yes, it was," answered Mikhailov, recalling bitterly what a sorry figure he had cut that night when, bent almost double, he had crept down the trench leading to the bastion and had met Kalugin striding along jauntily, cheerfully rattling his sword.

"I should really be going tomorrow," Mikhailov continued, "but one of our officers has fallen sick, so. . . ." He wanted to say that it was not his turn to go, but as the Commander of the Eighth Company was unwell and there was only one ensign left

in the company, he had felt it his duty to offer his services in place of Lieutenant Nepshitshtsky, and would therefore be leaving for the bastion that night. But Kalugin was not listening to him.

"I have a presentiment that something's going to happen in a day or two," he said to Prince Galtsin.

"Won't anything happen today?" Mikhailov enquired diffidently, glancing first at Kalugin and then at Galtsin. No one answered him. Galtsin only puckered up his nose in a comical way and, staring past the questioner's cap, remarked, after a short pause:

"Nice girl that, in the red kerchief. Do you know who she is, Captain?"

"She's a sailor's daughter. Lives near my lodgings," the lieutenant-captain replied.

"Let's go and have a good look at her."

Prince Galtsin linked one arm with Kalugin's and the other with the lieutenant-captain's, knowing that this would afford the latter a great deal of pleasure—and it did.

The lieutenant-captain was superstitious and considered it a great sin to amuse himself with women before going into action. On this occasion, however, he posed as a confirmed libertine; but neither Prince Galtsin nor Kalugin were at all impressed, and the girl in the red kerchief, who had often seen the lieutenant-captain blush as he passed by her window, opened her eyes in astonishment. Praskukhin walked behind, constantly tapping Prince Galtsin's arm and passing remarks in French; but as the path was too narrow for the four of them, he had no alternative but to walk alone, and only on the second round did he offer his arm to the brave and celebrated naval officer Servyagin, who had come up and spoken to him, also anxious to join the *aristocrats*. The famous hero gladly slipped his muscular arm, which had slain many a Frenchman, through that

of Praskukhin, whom everybody, including Servyagin, regarded as a bit of a bounder. When, however, Praskukhin, in explaining to Prince Galtsin how he was acquainted with this naval officer, whispered that he was the famous hero, the Prince, who had been at the 4th Bastion the day before and had seen a shell burst twenty paces away from where he was standing, deemed himself no less a hero than this gentleman, and believing that many reputations were too easily acquired, he completely ignored Servyagin.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant-Captain Mikhailov found so much pleasure in walking in the company of these gentlemen that he forgot the *dear* letter from T., the gloomy thoughts that had beset him at having to leave for the bastion, and mainly, the fact that he had to be home at seven o'clock. He remained with the others until, by talking exclusively among themselves and avoiding his eyes, they hinted that he might take his leave and finally walked off themselves. Nevertheless the lieutenant-captain felt quite pleased, and on passing Baron Pest,—a cadet who had been giving himself airs since the night before, which, for the first time, he had spent in the blindage in the 5th Bastion, and consequently regarded himself as a hero—he was not in the least perturbed by the suspiciously haughty way in which the cadet saluted him.

4

No sooner had the lieutenant-captain stepped over the threshold of his lodgings, however, than thoughts of quite a different nature assailed his mind. There, before him, was his little room with its earthen, uneven floor, its crooked paper-pasted windows; his old bed; the rug with the figure of an Amazon nailed on the wall over it and the two Tula pistols fastened to it; the untidy bed, covered with a cotton quilt, of the cadet who shared the room with him; there was his Nikita,

unkempt and greasy-haired, getting up from the floor and scratching; there was his old greatcoat, his boots, and the bundle, from which jutted a piece of soapy cheese and the neck of a beer bottle filled with vodka which he had packed in preparation for his journey to the bastion,—and with a feeling akin to horror he suddenly remembered that he had to spend a whole night with his company at the lodgements.

"I'll be killed tonight, for certain," he muttered to himself. "I can feel it. And the worst of it is that I didn't have to go, I volunteered. And the one who asks for it is always killed. What's the matter with that confounded Nepshitschetsky? Perhaps he isn't ill at all, and here a man will be killed because of him. Sure to be killed. Still, if I'm not killed I shall probably be recommended for a decoration. I saw how pleased the Regimental Commander was when I said, 'Allow me to go if Lieutenant Nepshitschetsky is ill.' If I'm not promoted to Major, I'll certainly get the Order of Vladimir. This is the thirteenth time I'm going to the bastion. Oh, 13! An unlucky number! I'll be killed this time, I can feel it. But somebody had to go. The company couldn't go under the command of an ensign. Suppose something happened? The honour of the regiment, the honour of the army is at stake. It is my *duty* to go... yes, my *duty*. But I have a presentiment." The lieutenant-captain forgot that this presentiment, more or less strong, came to him every time he had to go to the bastion, and he was not aware that the same presentiment, more or less strong, came to everybody before going into action. Somewhat calmed by his sense of duty, which was very strong in him, as it was in all people of limited intellect, he sat down to write a farewell letter to his father, relations with whom had been rather strained of late over money matters. Ten minutes later, his letter finished, he rose from the table, his eyes wet with tears, and repeating mentally all the prayers he knew (he was ashamed to say his prayers aloud in

front of his servant), he began to dress. He wanted very much to kiss the small icon of St. Mitrophanos which his mother had given him with her blessing before she died, and in which he had great faith, but since he was shy of Nikita, he hung the icon outside of his coat so as to be able to reach it without unbuttoning when he got into the street. His drunken, uncouth servant lazily handed him his new coat (the old one which he usually wore at the bastion had not been mended).

"Why isn't my coat mended? All you do is sleep, you rascal!" said Mikhailov angrily.

"Sleep," Nikita grumbled. "I'm on my feet from morning till night and get as tired as a dog, and I'm not even to be allowed to sleep!"

"You're drunk again, I see."

"Well, what about it? I don't get drunk on your money!"

"Hold your tongue, you brute!" shouted the lieutenant-captain. Feeling out of sorts already, he was now driven out of all patience by the insolence of Nikita, whom he loved, spoiled even, and with whom he had lived for quite twelve years. He felt ready to strike the man.

"Brute! Brute!" the servant reiterated. "Why do you call me names, sir? And at a time like this too! It's a sin to do that!"

Mikhailov remembered where he was going and felt ashamed.

"You're enough to try the patience of a saint, Nikita," he said meekly. "That is a letter to my father lying on the table—leave it there and don't touch it," he added, reddening.

"Yes, sir," said Nikita, melting under the influence of the vodka he had drunk on his *own money*, and blinking his eyes, ostensibly to keep back the tears.

But when, on the porch, the lieutenant-captain said: "Good-bye, Nikita!" the latter suddenly burst into affected sobs and ran to kiss his master's hand. "Good-bye, master!" he wailed, sniffing audibly.

The old sailor's widow, standing on the porch, like the woman she was, could not help joining the touching scene, and drying her eyes with her dirty sleeve she wailed something to the effect that if gentlefolk had to suffer like this, was it any wonder that she, poor soul, had been left a widow? And for the hundredth time she told drunken Nikita about her sorrows: how her husband was killed during the very first bombardment and how her cottage in the village had been wrecked (the one she was living in now was not her own), etc., etc. As soon as his master had gone, Nikita ceased sobbing, lit his pipe and sent the landlady's girl for vodka. His grief vanished, and he began to quarrel with the old woman over a bucket which he claimed she had dented.

"Perhaps I'll get off with only a wound," the lieutenant-captain reflected as he drew near the bastion with his company towards dusk. "But where? How? Here, or here?" he said to himself, mentally touching his abdomen and chest. "If I get hit here," he said, thinking of his thigh, "and it goes round, it'll hurt all the same. But suppose a splinter gets in?—I'll be done for then!"

However, the lieutenant-captain, crouching low, crept along the trenches and safely reached the lodgements. There, already in pitch-darkness, he, with the assistance of a sapper officer, gave his men their assignments and settled himself in a niche below the breastwork. There was little firing; only at rare intervals was there a lightning flash, now on our side and now on *his*, and the gleaming fuse of a shell formed a fiery arc in the dark, starry sky. But all the shells fell far behind and to the right of the lodgement where the lieutenant-captain was sitting in his niche, so that, somewhat reassured, he took a drink of vodka, ate a piece of his soapy cheese, lit a cigarette and after saying his prayers, composed himself for a nap.

Prince Galtsin, Lieutenant-Colonel Neferdov, and the cadet Baron Pest, who had met the others on the boulevard, and Praskukhin, whom no one had invited and with whom no one had talked, but who nevertheless had clung to their heels, all left the boulevard for Kalugin's lodgings to drink tea.

"You didn't finish telling me about Vaska Mendel," Kalugin said as he took off his coat, sank into an easy chair near the window and unbuttoned the collar of his spotless, starched Holland shirt. "How did he get married?"

"You'd die, my friend! Je vous dis, il y avait un temps où on ne parlait que de ça à Pétersbourg,"* said Galtsin with a laugh, jumping up from the piano-stool and planting himself on the windowsill near Kalugin. "You'd just die! I know all the details." And he eagerly related with wit and gusto a love story which we shall omit here because it has no interest for us.

The remarkable thing, however, was that not only Prince Galtsin, but all the gentlemen who had settled themselves about the room—one on the windowsill, another with his knees drawn up, a third at the piano—seemed altogether different from what they had been on the boulevard; the ludicrous puffed-up pride with which they had looked down upon the infantry officers had vanished. Here, in their own company, they were their natural selves, especially Kalugin and Galtsin—charming, unassuming, jolly and good-natured young fellows. The conversation revolved round their fellow officers and mutual acquaintances in St. Petersburg.

"How's Maslotskoi?"

"Which one, the Life Guard or the Horse Guard?"

"I know both. The Horse Guard was a mere whippersnapper

* I tell you, at one time they talked of nothing else in St. Petersburg.

in my time. Just out of school. But what about the older one—is he a captain yet?”

“Oh yes! Has been quite a long time.”

“Is he still carrying on with his Gypsy girl?”

“No, he has dropped her. . . .” And so on in the same strain.

Then Galtsin went to the piano and gave a fine rendition of a Gypsy song. Praskukhin, although uninvited, joined in and sang second, and did it so well that he was actually asked to continue, and this pleased him very much.

A manservant entered carrying a silver tray loaded with tea, cream and cakes.

“Serve the prince,” Kalugin ordered.

“Isn’t it strange to think,” said Galtsin, taking a glass and going over to the window, “that we are here in a besieged city *pianojingling*, drinking tea with cream, and in an apartment that I’d be glad to have in Petersburg?”

“If we didn’t have this,” said the old Lt. Colonel who was always discontented, “it would be impossible to bear this constant waiting for something—seeing them pounding and pounding away at us without end; if we had to live in muck and with no comforts. . . .”

“But what about our infantry officers,” Kalugin said, “they live at the bastions with the soldiers, sleep in blindages and eat soldiers’ borshch. What about them?”

“That’s just what I can’t understand,” said Galtsin. “And, to tell the truth, I can’t believe that people with grimy hands, dirty underclothing and lice can be brave. They can’t, you know, have *cette belle bravoure de gentilhomme*.”*

“They have no conception of this gallantry,” Praskukhin said.

“You are talking nonsense!” Kalugin interrupted angrily.

* That fine gallantry of the gentleman.

"I've seen more of them here than you have, and I'll always maintain that our infantry officers, even if they are lice-ridden, and don't change their linen for ten days at a stretch, are heroes, wonderful men!"

Just then an infantry officer entered the room.

"I ... I have orders ... may I see the Gen ... his Excellency? I'm from General N. N.," he stuttered in confusion and bowed.

Kalugin rose and, without returning the officer's bow, asked him with offensively studied courtesy and a strained official smile whether he would be good enough to wait, and then, without inviting the officer to sit down or taking any further notice of him, he turned to Galtsin and began to speak in French, so that the poor officer, left standing in the middle of the room, did not know what to do with himself or with his ungloved hands which hung in front of him.

"It is very urgent, sir," he said, after a short pause.

"Ah! This way then, please," said Kalugin with the same official smile, and putting on his coat he led the officer to the door.

"Eh bien, messieurs, je crois que cela chauffera cette nuit,"* Kalugin said, returning from the General's quarters.

"Eh? What? What? A sortie?" everybody asked.

"I don't know. You'll see for yourselves," Kalugin replied with a mysterious smile.

"Come now, tell me," pleaded Baron Pest. "If anything is up, I've got to go out in the first sortie with the T. regiment."

"Well, go, and God be with you."

"My chief is also at the bastion, and so I have to go along, too," said Praskukhin, buckling on his sword; but nobody replied—he ought to know himself whether he had to go or not.

* Well, gentlemen, I believe it'll be a hot night tonight.

"Nothing will happen, I can feel it," said Baron Pest, his heart sinking at the thought of the forthcoming action, but nevertheless putting on his cap at a rakish angle and firmly striding out of the room with Praskukhin and Neferdov, who were also hurrying to their posts with fear gripping at their hearts. "Good-bye, gentlemen!" "Au revoirs, gentlemen! See you again tonight," Kalugin called out of the window to Praskukhin and Pest as they set off at a canter down the road, bending over the pommels of their Cossack saddles, imagining they were Cossacks.

"Yes, quite!" the cadet shouted, failing to catch what Kalugin had said, and the patter of the hoofs of the little Cossack horses soon died away in the dark street.

"None, dites-moi, est-ce qu'il y aura véritablement quelque chose cette nuit,"* Galtsin asked leaning on the windowsill next to Kalugin to watch the shells soaring over the bastions.

"I can tell *you* about it. You've been at the bastions, haven't you? (Galtsin nodded, although he had only been once, at the 4th). Well then, look. Opposite our lunette there is a trench," and Kalugin, in the manner of a man, who, although not an expert, prided himself on his military knowledge, launched into a rather confused description of our positions and the enemy's—mixing up all the fortification terms in the process—and explained the plan of operations in the forthcoming action.

"I say, but they're beginning to do a bit of popping near the lodgements. Oho! Was that ours or *his*? The one that burst over there?" they exclaimed, leaning over the windowsill, gazing at the fiery tracks of shells crisscrossed against the sky, at the flashes of gunfire that suddenly illuminated the dark-blue sky and at the white clouds of gunpowder smoke, and listening to the ever-increasing sounds of the cannonade.

* No, tell me, will anything really happen tonight?

"Quel charmant coup d'œil!* eh?" Kalugin said, calling his guest's attention to the really magnificent spectacle. "Do you know, it's impossible to tell the stars from the shells?"

"Yes, I myself just thought I was looking at a star, but it dropped, and there, it has burst! And that big star up there—what is it called?—looks exactly like a shell."

"You know, I've got so used to these shells that I'm sure that when I get back to Russia I shall, on a starry night, mistake the stars for shells. One gets so used to them."

"Don't you think I ought to go out in this sortie?" Prince Galtsin asked after a pause, shuddering at the thought of being out *there* during this fearful cannonade and at the same time feeling a thrill of pleasure at the knowledge that he could not possibly be sent there at night.

"Good heavens, man, no! Drop that idea! Besides, I'll not let you go," Kalugin replied, well aware that Galtsin would not go there for anything. "You'll have plenty of opportunities yet, brother," he added.

"Seriously, now? Do you really think I need not go?"

Just then a terrible rattle of musketry fire was heard above the rumble of artillery, coming from the direction in which these young gentlemen were looking, and thousands of sparks flashed all along the line.

"The real fun has started now!" Kalugin exclaimed. "I can't keep cool when I hear the sound of muskets. It thrills me through and through. . . . D'you hear that—'Hurrah'," he added, listening to the distant drawn-out roar of hundreds of voices—"a-a-a-a-a-ah"—that came from the bastions.

"Whose cheers are those? Theirs or ours?"

"I can't tell, but they must be fighting at close quarters now, because the firing has died down."

* What a beautiful sight!

Just then an aide-de-camp accompanied by a Cossack galloped up to the porch under the window and dismounted.

"Where are you from?"

"From the bastion. I must see the General."

"Come along. Well, what's up?"

"They've attacked the lodgements... captured them... the French brought up large reserves... attacked our forces... we had only two battalions there," the officer panted. It was the same officer who had been there earlier in the evening, and though quite out of breath he strode up to the door with a light and springy step.

"Well, did we retreat?" Galtzin asked.

"No," the officer answered gruffly. "Another battalion came up in time and beat off the attack, but the regimental commander was killed, and many officers too. I have come to ask for reinforcements..."

With these words he passed into the General's rooms, whither we shall not follow him.

Five minutes later Kalugin was seated on his Cossack horse, in that peculiar *quasi*-Cossack posture which, I have noticed, all aides-de-camp seem to find most pleasurable, riding at a canter to the bastion to deliver the General's instructions and await news of the final outcome of the engagement. Meanwhile, Prince Galtzin, impelled by the agitation which an onlooker invariably experiences when watching a battle at close range, went out of the house and paced aimlessly up and down the street.

Crowds of soldiers were carrying wounded men on stretchers or assisting them on foot. It was quite dark in the street except for a few lighted windows of a hospital building or the lodgings of officers sitting up late. The roar of guns and musketry fire

still came from the bastions and flashes of light continued to break out against the black sky. Occasionally the patter of hoofs of a galloping dispatch rider, the moaning of a wounded man, the footsteps and voices of stretcher-bearers, or the frightened exclamations of women who had come out onto the porches to watch the cannonade were heard.

Among the latter was our friend Nikita, the old sailor's widow, with whom he was on good terms again, and her ten-year-old daughter.

"Dear Lord and Holy Mary, Mother of God!" the old woman gasped and sighed as she gazed at the shells which kept flying like balls of fire from one side to the other. "Look at them! Isn't it awful! Ai-ai-ai! It was not like that even at the first bombardment. Look where that thing has burst—right over our house in the village."

"No, no, farther on! They're all dropping into Aunt Arinka's garden," the girl said.

"And where, oh where is my master now?" Nikita, still a bit drunk, wailed in a singsong voice. "Oh how I love my master—I just can't tell you. . . . Although he beats me, I love him all the same. I love him so much that if, God forbid, he gets killed, Auntie, believe me, I just don't know what I'd do to myself. Honest to God! What a master he is—ach! You can't compare him to those card-playing fellows, they're a nasty lot—ugh!" Nikita concluded, pointing to the lighted window of his master's room, where Cadet Zhvadcheski, taking advantage of the lieutenant-captain's absence, had arranged a little party to celebrate his decoration with the St. George's Cross. The party consisted of Sub-Lieutenant Ugrovich and Lieutenant Nepshitshetsky, whose turn it had been to go to the bastion but could not go because he had a gumboil.

"The stars—they just keep shooting and shooting!" exclaimed the little girl who was gazing up at the sky, breaking the

silence that had followed Nikita's lamentations. "Look! There's some more! What does it all mean, Mum?"

"They'll smash our house up altogether now," the old woman sighed, paying no heed to her daughter.

"When me and uncle went out there today, Mum," the girl chattered on in her singsong voice, "we saw a big cannon ball right in the front room, next to the cupboard: it must've gone through the passage. Such a whopper too, you couldn't lift it."

"Those who had husbands and money all went away," the old woman said. "But me, poor soul . . . the house, the only thing I had, and that's ruined. Look, look how he's blazing away, the devil! Lord, O Lord!"

"And just as we were coming out one great big bomb came flying over us—wh-i-i-z-z! and burst—c-r-r-a-a-sh! And the earth came tumbling down on us, and me and uncle were nearly hit by a splinter."

"She ought to get a Cross for that," said the cadet, who had come out on to the porch with the other officers to watch the cannonade.

"You ought to go and see the General, old woman, really you ought," said Lieutenant Nepshitshtsky, patting the widow on the shoulder.

"Pójdę na ulicę zobaczyć co tam nowego,"* he added, running down the steps.

"A my tymczasem napijemy sie wódki, bo coś dusza w pięty ucieka,"** said jolly Zhvadcheski with a laugh.

* I'll take a turn down the street and see what's new.

** And we, meanwhile, will take a nip of vodka, for it's getting to be a bit frightening.

Prince Galtsin encountered more and more wounded soldiers, some borne on stretchers, others helping each other along on foot, and all talking loudly among themselves.

"You should have seen them going for us, lads," boomed a tall soldier with two muskets slung over his shoulder. "They came tearing up yelling 'Allah, Allah!*' and scrambling over each other. You knock some down, but up jumps another lot and there was nothing you could do with them. There were hordes and hordes of them! . . ."

At this point Galtsin stopped the speaker and asked:

"Are you from the bastion?"

"Yes, Your Honour."

"Well, what happened there? Tell me about it."

"What happened? Why, they came up, a regular *force*, Your Honour. They rushed the rampart like mad and we couldn't stop them, Your Honour!"

"What do you mean, couldn't stop them? You beat them off, didn't you?"

"How could we beat them off when they were such a *force*? They wiped out our lot and no *succours* came." (The soldier was mistaken, we retained the trench, but it is a strange fact which anybody may observe, that a soldier wounded in action always thinks that the battle was lost and that it had been a very sanguinary one.)

"But I was told that the assault was beaten off," Galtsin said in a voice of chagrin.

At that moment Lieutenant Nepshitshtsky, recognizing Prince Galtsin in the darkness by his white cap and wishing to

* Ever since the war with the Turks, our soldiers have become so accustomed to this battle cry of the enemy, that nowadays they always tell you that the French also cry "Allah!"



take the opportunity to speak to such an important personage, approached.

"Have you any idea what happened?" he inquired respectfully, touching his cap.

"That's just what I'm trying to find out myself," Prince Galtsin said, and turning once more to the soldier with the two muskets, he asked: "Perhaps we beat them off after you left? Is it long since you left?"

"I'm just coming from there, Your Honour!" the soldier replied. "I doubt whether we beat them off. They must have held the trench. They were too much for us."

"Aren't you ashamed of yourselves, giving up the trench? It's simply too bad!" said Galtsin, put out by the indifference displayed by the soldier. "Aren't you ashamed of yourselves!" he repeated, turning away from the soldier.

"Oh! They are an awful crowd! You don't know them, sir," Lieutenant Nepshitshtsky chimed in. "Let me tell you, it's no use expecting pride, patriotism or any feeling from these men. Look at the crowd coming along now. Scarcely a tenth of them

are wounded—they are all *assistants*—finding an excuse to get out of action. They are a vile mob. . . . You ought to be ashamed of yourselves to behave like that, lads, really you ought, to surrender *our* trench in that way!" he added, addressing the soldiers.

"But what could we do when they were in such *force*?" the soldier grumbled.

"I should say so, Your Honour!" said a soldier from one of the stretchers as it drew level with the officers. "How could we hold it when nearly all our men were wiped out, eh? Had we been strong enough, we'd never have given it up, never in our lives. But what could we do? I bayoneted one and then something came down on me with a crash. . . . O-och! Go easy lads! Steady there, steady, o-och!" he groaned.

"There really do seem to be more men coming this way than need be," said Galtsin, and, turning again to the tall soldier with the two muskets, he called out: "Where are you going? Hey, you! Stop!"

The soldier halted and pulled off his cap with his left hand.

"Where are you going, and why?" Galtsin shouted at him sternly. "Rasc. . . ." but as he drew close to the soldier he noticed that the latter's right cuff was empty and that his sleeve was soaked in blood right up to the elbow and higher.

"I'm wounded, Your Honour."

"Where?"

"Right here, a bullet wound, I suppose," the soldier said, nodding towards his hand. "And something hit my head, but I don't know what it was," and with that he bent his head and showed the prince the blood-soaked matted hair at the nape of his neck.

"What's that other musket you're carrying?"

"A French *Stutzer*, Your Honour. I captured it. I wouldn't

have left if I didn't have to help that little fellow. He'll fall if I don't hold him up," he added, pointing to a soldier who was limping on ahead, supporting himself with his musket and dragging his left leg painfully.

"And where are you going, you scoundrel!" Lieutenant Nepshitschetsky, eager to win the approval of the important prince, shouted to another soldier who was coming down the road. That soldier was also wounded.

Prince Galtsin suddenly felt terribly ashamed of Lieutenant Nepshitschetsky, and still more of himself. He felt that he was blushing—something he rarely did—and turned away from the lieutenant. Without making any further enquiries or even looking at the wounded men, he set off in the direction of the dressing station.

Pushing his way with difficulty through the crowds of wounded on foot and the stretchers going in with the wounded and coming out with the dead, Galtsin mounted the steps of the porch and entered the first room he came to, glanced in and involuntarily turned back and ran out into the street. The sight was too horrible!

8

The large, lofty, dark room, lit up only by four or five candles, by the light of which the surgeons examined the wounded, was packed. The stretcher-bearers kept bringing in wounded men, laid them down side by side on the floor, which was already so crowded that the poor men jostled each other and weltered in each other's blood, and went out for more. The pools of blood visible on the vacant patches of floor, the feverish breathing of several hundred men and the odour of perspiration exuded by the stretcher-bearers produced a heavy, thick and evil-smelling haze through which the four candles in each corner of the room glimmered dimly. The room echoed with groans.

sighs, and the rattle in the throats of the dying, drowned from time to time by piercing shrieks. Here and there among the bloodstained coats and shirts of the wounded nurses could be seen, their faces calm, expressing not vapid, feminine, tearful pity, but practical and efficient sympathy, stepping over the patients, carrying medicine, water, bandages and lint. The surgeons, with set faces and their shirtsleeves rolled up over their elbows, knelt beside the patients—over whom the feldshers were holding candles—and probed and groped inside bullet wounds with their fingers and twisted broken and dangling limbs, heedless of the awful groans and entreaties of the sufferers. One of the surgeons sat at a small table near the door. At the moment Galtsin glanced in the surgeon registered the 532nd arrival.

"Ivan Bogayev, private, Third Company, S. Regiment, fracture femoris complicata,"* another surgeon shouted from the other end of the room, probing a fractured leg. "Turn him over."

"O-oh, father, father!" shrieked the soldier, pleading not to be touched.

"Perforatio copitis."**

"Semyon Neferdov, Lieutenant-Colonel, N. Infantry Regiment. This won't do at all, Colonel. Try to bear it a little or I'll have to give it up," a third was saying, groping inside a wound in the unfortunate lieutenant-colonel's head with some hooked instrument.

"Oh, don't! For God's sake, quick, quick . . . a-a-a-ah!"

"Perforatio pectoris. . . *** Sevastyan Sereda, private . . . what regiment? . . . no, don't write anything: moritur**** Take

* Compound fracture of the thigh.

** Fractured skull.

*** Perforated chest.

**** He is dying.



him away," the surgeon said, leaving a soldier who had already rolled up his eyes and was emitting the death rattle.

About forty stretcher-bearers, who were waiting at the door ready to take those whose wounds had been dressed to the hospital and the dead to the chapel, silently watched this scene and now and again heaved a deep sigh.

On his way to the bastion Kalugin passed many wounded men, but knowing from experience what a depressing effect the sight of wounded men had upon a man going into action, he not only did not stop to question them, but completely ignored them. At the foot of the hill he came across an aide-de-camp galloping at top speed from the direction of the bastion.

"Zobkin! Zobkin! Wait a second!"

"Well, what?"

"Where are you from?"

"The lodgements."

"Well, how are things going out there? Hot?"

"It's hell let loose. Awful!"

With this he galloped off. Actually, there was little musket firing, but the cannonade had been resumed with added fury and intensity.

"Looks pretty bad," Kalugin thought, a disagreeable sensation creeping over him; and he too had a presentiment, *i.e.*, a very common thought entered his mind—the thought of death. But Kalugin was not Lieutenant-Captain Mikhailov; he was proud, had nerves of iron, in short, he was what they call a brave man. He did not yield to his initial feeling and began to cheer himself up. He recalled the story of an aide-de-camp—Napoleon's, he thought it was—who, after delivering

his dispatches, had galloped back to Napoleon with a bleeding head.

"Vous êtes blessé?"* Napoleon asked him.

"Je vous demande pardon, sire, je suis tué,"** and the aide fell dead to the ground.

He thought that this was magnificent and for a moment pictured himself as that aide-de-camp, then, whipping up his horse, he assumed the more dashing *Cossack style* seat in the saddle, and after glancing round at a Cossack who was standing up in his stirrups and riding at a canter behind him, he galloped on and arrived at his destination ready for anything. There he found four soldiers sitting on some boulders smoking their pipes.

"What are you doing here?" he shouted to them.

"Taking a rest after carrying a wounded man to the dressing station," one of them said, hiding his pipe behind his back and pulling his cap off.

"Resting are you? Up with you and quick march to your places, or I'll report you to the regimental commander!"

Together with them he proceeded along the trenches winding uphill, encountering wounded men at every step. On reaching the summit he turned into the trench on his left and after proceeding a few paces he found himself absolutely alone. A shell splinter whizzed past him very close and hit the trench. Another shell soared up in front and seemed to be making straight for him. He was suddenly seized by fear. Running a few steps he dropped to the ground. But when the shell exploded far behind him, he felt terribly vexed with himself. Rising, he glanced around to see if anybody had seen him fall, but there was no one around.

* You are wounded?

** I beg your pardon, Sire, I am dead.

When fear has once gripped one's heart it does not readily yield to any other feeling; he who had always boasted that he never stopped in a trench, now hurried along it crouching almost on all fours. "Ach, too bad," he thought, stumbling in his haste. "I'll be killed for certain," and feeling how difficult it was for him to breathe and the perspiration breaking out all over his body, he was surprised, but he made no further attempt to master his feelings.

Suddenly he heard footsteps ahead. He rose quickly, raised his head, and clanking his sabre, boldly proceeded at a slower pace. He became unrecognizable even to himself. When he met the sapper officer and the sailor who were running towards him, and when the former shouted "Down!" and pointed to the bright dot of a shell which, becoming brighter and brighter as it approached with ever increasing speed and dropped near the trench, he merely ducked his head instinctively on hearing the frightened exclamation and continued on his way.

"Brave, isn't he?" remarked the sailor who had been coolly watching the shell fall, his experience telling him that the splinters could not reach the trench. "He won't lie down!"

Kalugin had only a few more paces to go to cross the open space to the blindage of the Bastion Commander when he again felt his mind going blank and that foolish terror creeping over him; his heart throbbed faster, the blood rushed to his head and he had to make an effort to sprint across to the blindage.

"Why are you panting like that?" the General asked when Kalugin had delivered the dispatch he was carrying.

"I walked very fast, Your Excellency!"

"Would you like a glass of wine?"

Kalugin drank a glass of wine and lit a cigarette. The engagement had ended, although both sides continued their heavy cannonade. In the blindage were General NN, the Com-

mander of the Bastion, and six other officers, including Praskukhin, discussing the details of the engagement. Sitting in this cozy room with its blue wallpaper, couch, bed, and table littered with papers, the clock on the wall, and the icon with the tiny oil lamp burning in front of it, looking at all these signs of habitation and at the stout beams that formed the ceiling, and listening to the firing which sounded so faint in the blindage, Kalugin positively could not understand how it was that he had twice let himself be overcome by such unpardonable weakness; he was annoyed with himself and wished for danger so that he could show his mettle once more.

"Ah, I'm glad to see you here, Captain," he said to a naval officer with a bushy moustache, wearing a Staff officer's great-coat and a St. George's Cross, who had just come in to ask the General to give him a few men to repair two embrasures in his battery. "The General," Kalugin went on, when the battery commander had ceased talking, "has ordered me to ascertain whether your guns can reach the trenches with shrapnel."

"Only one gun can," the captain replied gloomily.

"Let's go and have a look."

The captain frowned and emitted an angry snort.

"I've been out there all night and have just come in to get a rest," he said. "Can't you go alone? My assistant, Lieutenant Kartz, is there, he'll show you around."

The Captain had been in command of this battery, one of the most dangerous in the fortress, for six whole months, even before the blindages had been built, and had not left the bastion since the siege began; and among the *sailors* he enjoyed the reputation of being a brave man. Consequently, Kalugin was amazed and staggered by the captain's refusal.

"What's a reputation after that?" he thought.

"Very well, I shall go alone, if you will permit me," he said in a slightly sarcastic tone, but the captain ignored it.

Kalugin had not stopped to think, however, that whereas he had spent no more than fifty hours all told at different times at the bastions, the captain had been there continuously for six months. Kalugin was still prompted by vanity—by the desire to shine, the hope of receiving decorations, of winning a reputation, and of experiencing the thrill of danger; but the captain had already passed that stage: in the beginning he too had been vain and bold, had risked his skin, had hoped for decorations and a reputation, and had even acquired them; but now all these incentives had lost their attraction for him and he saw things with different eyes: he performed his duty accurately, but being well aware what few chances he had left of life after six months at the bastion, he no longer did anything to jeopardize those chances unless it was absolutely essential. Consequently, the young lieutenant, who had joined the battery only a week before and was now taking Kalugin around—both needlessly vying with each other in poking their heads out of the embrasures and climbing on to the banquette,—seemed to be a much braver man than the captain.

On his way back to the blindage after inspecting the battery, Kalugin, in the dark, ran into the General who was going to the watchtower accompanied by his aides.

"Captain Praskukhin!" the General was saying. "Please go to the lodgement on the right and tell the 2nd Battalion of the M. Regiment to stop work and leave the place without a sound. They are to join their regiment, which is stationed at the foot of the hill, in reserve. Is that clear? Lead them to the regiment yourself."

"Very good, sir."

Praskukhin hastened to the lodgement. The firing gradually subsided.

"Is this the 2nd Battalion of the M. Regiment?" Praskukhin asked as he arrived at his destination and stumbled against a soldier carrying a sack of earth on his back.

"Yes, sir."

"Where's your commander?"

Thinking that it was the company commander who was being called for, Mikhailov climbed out of his dugout and taking Praskukhin for a commanding officer, saluted as he approached him.

"General's orders.... You're... to go quickly, above all noiselessly... back, no, not back—to the reserves," said Praskukhin, casting a sidelong glance in the direction of the enemy's fire.

Recognizing Praskukhin and grasping the situation, Mikhailov dropped his hand. He passed on the instructions, and soon the battalion was on its feet; the men picked up their muskets, flung on their coats, and marched out.

Those who have not experienced it themselves cannot imagine the relief that is felt on leaving a dangerous place like lodgements after three long hours of bombardment. During these three hours Mikhailov gave himself up for lost over and over again and fervidly kissed every icon he had with him, but towards the end he became convinced that since so many shells and cannon balls had come over without hitting him, none would hit him now, and his fear abated somewhat. Nevertheless, he had to exert no little effort to keep his legs from running away with him when he left the lodgement at the head of the company with Praskukhin at his side.

"Good-bye," said the major who was in command of the battalion that was remaining in the lodgement and with whom Mikhailov had shared his soapy cheese in the niche under the

breastwork. "Safe journey!" "Wish you luck too. It looks as if things are quietening down a bit."

No sooner were the words out of his mouth, however, than the enemy, having probably noticed the animation in the lodgement, increased his fire. Our guns responded, and the cannonade burst out again with full force. The stars were high in the sky, but shone dimly; it was a pitch-dark night; only the flashes from the guns and the bursting shells lit up the objects around for flickering moments. The soldiers marched at a rapid pace in silence, unconsciously trying to run ahead of each other; only the measured tread of their feet over the hard ground, the clicking of bayonet against bayonet, and a sigh or a prayer mumbled by some timid soldier: "Lord, O Lord! What's going to happen?" could be heard above the ceaseless roar of artillery. Now and again the groan of a wounded man and the cry of "stretcher-bearers!" struck the ear. (That night twenty-six men of Mikhailov's company were put out of action by artillery fire.) A lightning flash appeared over the murky distant horizon; a sentinel on the bastion cried out: "C-a-a-nnon!" and a ball swished overhead, dropped, ploughed up the ground and sent up a shower of stones.

"The devil take it—how slowly they are moving," Praskukhin thought, glancing back continually as he marched at Mikhailov's side. "I'd better run on ahead. After all, I've delivered the order. . . . No, I'd better not—that beast might tell everybody what a coward I was, as I did yesterday about him. I'll keep by his side, come what may."

"Why the blazes does he have to stick to me?" Mikhailov thought on his part. "I've noticed more than once that he brings bad luck. Here's another coming—heading straight for us, I think."

A few hundred paces farther they came upon Kalugin clanking his sabre gallantly as he strode towards the lodgements

on the General's orders to ascertain how the work was going on there. On seeing Mikhailov it occurred to him that it would be better to question this officer who had just come from there than to go along himself under this awful barrage—the more so that he hadn't been ordered to do so. Mikhailov did indeed give him a detailed account of the work, and during the telling of it he afforded Kalugin—who appeared to be totally oblivious to the firing—no little amusement by ducking his head and squatting each time a shell flew past and fell, sometimes quite far away, and assuring him that “this one's coming straight here.”

“Look out, Captain, this one's coming straight here,” Kalugin would say by way of a joke and give Praskukhin a nudge. He went on a little way further with them and turned into the trench leading to the blindage. “You can't say that that captain's very brave,” he thought as he entered the shelter.

“Well, what's new?” asked an officer who was eating his supper there in solitude.

“Nothing much. I don't think anything more will happen tonight.”

“What do you mean? Why, the General has just gone up to the watchtower and another regiment has arrived. There! Do you hear that? Musketry fire again! Don't go, you needn't, you know,” he added, noticing the movement Kalugin had made.

“I really ought to be out there,” Kalugin thought, “but I've risked my skin enough for one day. I hope I'm good enough for something besides chair à canon.”*

“Yes, I believe I'd better wait for them here,” he said.

Five minutes later the General returned accompanied by his officers, among whom was cadet Baron Pest, but Praskukhin was not with them.

* Cannon fodder.

We stormed and recaptured the lodgements.

After hearing a detailed account of the action, Kalugin left the blindage accompanied by Pest.

11

"There's blood on your coat. You don't mean to tell me that you have been fighting at close quarters, do you?" Kalugin asked Pest.

"Ach, brother, it was awful! Just imagine..." And Pest went on to tell him how he had taken over command of the whole company when its commander was killed, how he had bayoneted a Frenchman, that if it were not for him, nothing would have come of the affair, etc.

The main facts of this story were true enough—the company commander had been killed and Pest had bayoneted a Frenchman—but in recounting the details, the cadet bragged and gave full reign to his imagination.

He bragged unconsciously, though, for during the entire action he had been in sort of haze and trance; so much so, in fact, that everything seemed to have happened at another place, at another time and to another person. Naturally, he tried to reconstruct the details in a way as to put himself in the best light. What really happened was this:

The battalion to which the cadet had been attached for the sortie had been stationed near a low wall and exposed to fire for two whole hours; then the battalion commander in front had said something, the company commanders began to bustle. the battalion moved, emerged from behind the breastwork and after proceeding for about a hundred paces, halted and lined up in company formation. Pest was ordered to take his place on the right flank of the 2nd Company.

Having not the slightest idea where he was and why he was there, the cadet took his place and, unconsciously holding

his breath and feeling a cold shiver run down his spine, he peered into the darkness ahead, expecting something terrible to happen. He was frightened not so much because the firing had ceased, as at the strange and horrible thought that he was in the open field, outside the fort. The battalion commander in front said something again. Again the officers passed on the order in whispers and suddenly the black wall formed by the First Company seemed to collapse. The order had been to lie down. The Second Company also lay down, and Pest, in going down, pricked his hand on something sharp. Only the commander of the 2nd Company remained on his feet. His short figure moved down the line in front of his company while he, waving his drawn sword, kept up a flow of words.

"Lads! Be brave, now! Don't shoot—give the s a bit of cold steel. When I shout 'Hurrah!' follow me, and don't lag behind. . . . The main thing is to keep together. . . . We'll show them the stuff we're made of—we won't disgrace ourselves, eh, lads? For our little father, for the Tsar!" he said, interspersing his words with oaths and gesticulating wildly.

"What's our company commander's name?" Pest asked of a cadet who was lying next to him. "He's a brave fellow, isn't he?"

"Yes. Whenever he goes into action, he's a regular daredevil," replied the cadet. "His name's Lisinkovsky."

At that moment a tongue of flame shot up right in front of the company, followed by a deafening crash; stones and splinters were heard whizzing high in the air (at all events, some fifty seconds later a stone fell and crushed a soldier's leg). It was a shell from a *high angle gun*, and the fact that it dropped right over the company showed that the French had detected the column.

"Ha! Shells, eh, you damned sons of bitches! Just let us get at you. You'll get a taste of our Russian three-edged bayonets,

you bastards!" the company commander bawled so loudly that the battalion commander had to order him to shut up and stop making a noise.

After that the First Company rose to its feet followed by the Second. The order was given to tilt bayonets, and the battalion advanced. Pest was so frightened that he could not remember how long they marched, where to, and against whom. He walked as if he were drunk. Suddenly a million sparks flashed out in all directions at once, followed by a frightful whizzing and rattling. He ran and shouted because everybody else ran and shouted. Then he stumbled and fell over something. It was the company commander (who, at the head of the company, had been wounded, and taking the cadet for a Frenchman had seized him by the leg). Then, when he had wrenched his leg free and had scrambled to his feet, somebody in the dark collided with him and nearly threw him over again. Another man cried, "*Run him through! What are you waiting for?*" Somebody grabbed a musket and plunged the bayonet into something soft. "A moi, Camarades! Ah, sacre b.... Ah! Dieu!"* somebody else cried out in a bloodcurdling voice, and only then did Pest realize that he had bayoneted a Frenchman. Cold perspiration broke out over his whole body; he began to shiver as if with ague and he dropped his musket. But this lasted only for an instant; it suddenly occurred to him that he was a hero. Picking up his musket and shouting "Hurrah!" he, with the rest, ran away from the dead Frenchman, whose boots were already being removed by a soldier. Running another twenty paces, he reached a trench. There he found our men and the battalion commander.

"I bayoneted one of them!" he told the commander.

"You're a brave lad, Baron...."

* This way, comrades! Oh hell! O God!

"Do you know, Praskukhin is killed," said Pest to Kalugin as he accompanied him on his way home.

"Impossible!"

"Ah, but I saw him myself."

"Yes? But I'm in a hurry. Good-bye."

"I'm very pleased," Kalugin thought as he returned to his quarters. "The first stroke of luck I've had while on duty. Everything's capital: I am alive, and safe and sound; I'll be strongly recommended for decoration, and of course, a gold sword. I certainly deserve it."

After giving the General all the necessary information, he went to his room where he found Prince Galtsin, who had long since returned and was waiting up for him, reading *Splendeur et misères des courtisanes*,* which he had found on Kalugin's table.

Kalugin was delighted to feel that he was home at last and out of danger and, donning his nightshirt, he got into bed and began to tell Galtsin about the engagement, recounting the details in such a way as to show quite naturally that he, Kalugin, was a very efficient and brave officer, which was superfluous, for everybody was aware of this and had no right or reason to doubt it, except, perhaps, the late Captain Praskukhin who, although he had regarded it an honour to walk arm in arm with Kalugin, had only the day before told a friend of his in strict confidence that Kalugin was an excellent fellow, but, *entre nous*, hated to go to the bastions.

* "The Splendour and Misery of Courtisans," by Balzac. One of those charming books which have appeared in such profusion lately, and which for some reason, are exceptionally popular among our young people.

Praskukhin, striding along at Mikhailov's side, had scarcely parted from Kalugin and, on reaching a less dangerous spot, was already beginning to cheer up a bit when a lightning flash broke out behind him and he heard a sentinel cry "Mortar!" and one of the soldiers walking behind him say: "It's heading straight for the battalion!" Mikhailov glanced over his shoulder. A bright speck of a shell seemed to have halted at its zenith, in a position from which it was absolutely impossible to tell in which direction it was flying. But this lasted only a second. The shell drew nearer and nearer with increasing speed, so that the sparks of the fuse could already be seen and its whine distinctly heard, and then dropped in the middle of the battalion.

"Down!" somebody cried out in a frightened voice.

Mikhailov fell flat on his stomach. Praskukhin instinctively crouched almost to the ground and closed his eyes; all he heard was the sound of the shell hitting the hard ground somewhere very near. A second passed which seemed an hour, but the shell did not explode. Praskukhin was assailed by the fear that he had funk'd without cause, that the shell had dropped far away and that he had only imagined that the fuse was spluttering nearby. He opened his eyes and saw with smug satisfaction that Mikhailov, whom he owed twelve and a half rubles, was not merely crouching, but lying on his stomach motionless, pressing against his, Praskukhin's feet. But in the same instant his eyes caught the glowing fuse of the shell, which was spinning not more than a yard away from him.

Terror, a cold terror that eclipsed every other thought and feeling, gripped his entire being. He covered his face with his hands and dropped to his knees.

Another second passed, a second during which a whole world of sensations, thoughts, hopes and memories flashed through his mind.

"Whom will it kill?—Mikhailov or me? Or both together? And if it hits me, then where? In the head? That would be the end. My leg? Then they'll cut it off—and I'll insist that they give me chloroform—and I may remain alive. But perhaps only Mikhailov will be killed. In that case I'll tell everybody how we were walking side by side, how he was killed, and I was spattered with his blood. No, it's closer to me—it'll hit me!" Suddenly he recalled the twelve rubles which he owed Mikhailov, and another debt, long overdue, which he owed someone in St. Petersburg; the tune of the Gypsy song he had sung that evening came to his mind; the vision of the woman he loved appeared before him, wearing a bonnet with purple ribbons; he remembered the man who had insulted him five years ago and from whom he had not yet obtained satisfaction; but with these and thousands of other memories here was inseparably connected the consciousness of the present—anticipation of death and horror—which did not leave him for an instant. "Perhaps it won't burst," he thought and made a desperate effort to open his eyes. But at that moment a lurid glare struck his eyes through the closed lids and something hit him with a terrific thud in the middle of his chest; he got up and ran, stumbled over his own sword which got between his legs, and fell on his side.

"Thank God! It's only a contusion!" was his first thought. He wanted to touch his chest, but his arms seemed to be pinned down, and his head felt as if it were clamped in a vice. Several soldiers flitted past his eyes and instinctively he began to count them: "One, two, three privates, and here comes an officer with his coat tucked up," he thought; then a light flashed in his eyes and he wondered what had been fired, a mortar or a cannon? It must have been a cannon. There goes another shot, and here are some more soldiers—five, six, seven privates, and all walking past. Suddenly he felt afraid lest they would trample

upon him; he wanted to cry out that he was injured, but his mouth was so dry that his tongue clove to the roof and he was tormented by a terrible thirst. He felt some moisture round about his chest, and this made him think of water, and he was ready to drink that moisture. "I must be bleeding. Must have cut myself in falling," he thought, yielding more and more to the fear lest the soldiers who continued to flit past him would crush him. Mustering all his strength he wanted to shout: "Take me!" but instead he uttered a groan so terrible that the sound of it frightened him. Red lights danced in front of his eyes, and it seemed to him that the soldiers were heaping stones on him; the lights grew fewer and fewer and the stones that were being piled on him pressed down more and more heavily upon him. He made an effort to throw off the stones, stretched,—and then saw no more, heard no more, thought no more and felt no more. He was killed outright by a splinter that hit him in the middle of his chest.

13

On catching sight of the shell, Mikhailov dropped to the ground and, like Praskukhin, shut his eyes, opened and closed them twice, and was overwhelmed by the same flood of thoughts and feelings in the two seconds that elapsed before the shell burst. He mentally prayed to God, reiterating over and over again: "Thy will be done!" and at the same time thinking: "Why did I join the army? And on top of that transfer to the infantry to take part in the war? Would it not have been better to have remained in the Uhlan regiment in the town of T. and have spent the time with my friend Natasha.... Instead of that, here I am!" Then he began to count: One, two, three, four,—deciding that if the shell burst at an even number he would live, but if it burst at an odd number he would be killed. "It's all up. I'm killed!" he thought when the shell exploded

(whether at an even or an odd number he failed to notice); he felt something hit him and a severe pain shot through his head. "O Lord, forgive my sins!" he muttered, clasping his hands. He rose up a little and then fell on his back unconscious.

His first sensations when he came to were those of blood trickling down his nose and of a pain in the head, which was gradually subsiding. "That's my soul passing away," he thought. "What awaits me *there*? Lord! Receive my soul in peace. Strange though, he argued with himself, "that I should be dying and yet hear the footsteps of the soldiers and the firing so clearly!"

"Hi, there, call the stretcher-bearers! The Captain's killed!" a voice shouted above his head. He recognized it as that of the drummer Ignatyev.

Somebody took him by the shoulders. He ventured to open his eyes and overhead saw the dark blue sky, clusters of stars, and two shells soaring past, one chasing the other; then he saw Ignatyev, some soldiers with a stretcher and carrying their muskets, and the wall of the trench; and he suddenly realized that he had not yet arrived in the other world.

He had received a slight wound in the head from a stone. His first feeling seemed to be one of regret: he had prepared himself so thoroughly for the journey up *there* that this return to reality with its shells, trenches, soldiers and blood had a disagreeable effect upon him; but his next impression was that of instinctive joy that he was alive, and the third was that of fear and a desire to get away from the bastion as quickly as possible. The drummer bound his head with a handkerchief, and, supporting him, led him to the dressing station.

"But where am I going, and why?" the lieutenant-captain thought when he had collected his wits somewhat. "It is my duty to remain with the company and not be the first to leave; the more so that it will soon be out of range of the enemy's

fire," a voice whispered in his ear. "And if I remain in action wounded, a decoration will be certain."

"It's all right, my lad," he said, pulling his arm away from the obliging drummer, who, incidentally, had mainly desired to get away himself. "I won't go to the dressing station. I'll stay here with the company."

With that he turned to go back.

"You had better get your wound properly seen to, Your Honour," said the timid Ignatyev. "In the excitement you don't feel it's anything serious. but it might get worse. Look at the fireworks going on here. . . . Really, Your Honour."

Mikhailov halted irresolutely for a moment, and was about to follow Ignatyev's advice when he remembered a scene he had witnessed at the dressing station a few days before. An officer with a slight scratch on his hand had stepped in to get it dressed, but the surgeons had smiled as they examined the scratch, and one of them—with side whiskers—had even remarked that the wound was by no means fatal, and that it was possible to hurt oneself more seriously with a fork.

"They may look as suspiciously at my wound and smile, and may even say something nasty," the lieutenant-captain thought, and ignoring the drummer's arguments, he resolutely went back to the company.

"By the way, where is that aide Praskukhin who was marching by my side," he asked the ensign who had taken charge of the company.

"I don't know. Killed, I think," reluctantly replied the ensign who, incidentally, was very annoyed by the lieutenant-captain's return, for it deprived him of the pleasure of being able to say that he had been the only officer left in the company.

"Killed or wounded? How is it you don't know? He was with us, wasn't he? Why haven't you picked him up?"

"How could we in such a hot scrimmage?"

"Ach, how could you, Mikhal Ivanovich," Mikhailov said angrily. "How could you abandon him; supposing he's alive? And even if he were killed you should have taken his body along. After all, he's the General's aide, and he may still be alive!"

"How can he be alive when I'm telling you I went up and saw him myself," the ensign retorted. "My God, we're having trouble enough getting away ourselves. There's the bastard again! Throwing cannon balls now," he added ducking suddenly. Mikhailov followed suit, but the action sent a pain shooting through his head, which he clutched with both his hands.

"No, no! You must go and get him! Perhaps he's still alive," he said. "It is our *duty*, Mikhailo Ivanich!"

Mikhailo Ivanich made no reply.

"If he were a good officer, he would have picked him up before. Now we shall have to send the men out by themselves. But how can I do that? They might be killed for nothing under this terrific fire!" Mikhailov thought.

"Lads! Some of you must go back and pick up the officer who is lying wounded in that ditch over there," he said, not too loudly or imperatively, for he realized how disagreeable it was for the soldiers to carry out this order. And since he had addressed no one in particular, nobody moved.

"Sergeant! Come here!"

The sergeant walked on as if he had not heard.

"Perhaps he is dead and it isn't *worth while* exposing the men to danger unnecessarily. It is my own fault. I should have seen to this before. I'll go and see if he is alive. It is my *duty*," Mikhailov said to himself.

"Mikhal Ivanich! Take over the company; I'll catch up with you later," he said as he tucked up his coat with one hand and with the other fingered the icon of St. Mitrophanos—in which he had particular faith—and crawling almost on all

fours and shivering with fear, he ran down the length of the trench.

After convincing himself that his comrade was dead, he, still panting, ducking, and holding the loosened bandage on his head, which was again aching, severely, made his way back. The battalion had already reached the foot of the hill and was almost out of range of fire by the time Mikhailov caught up with it. I say *almost* out of range of fire, because a few stray shells reached even here (that very night a captain who was in a sailors' dugout during the action was killed by a splinter).

"I'd better go to the dressing station and get myself registered tomorrow," thought the lieutenant-captain while a feldsher bandaged his wound. "It'll help me get my decoration."

14

Hundreds of fresh, gory corpses of men who only two hours before had been filled with the most diverse hopes and desires, both lofty and petty, were lying with stiffened limbs in the dewy, flower-carpeted valley which separated the bastion from the trenches, and on the smooth floor of the Mortuary Chapel in Sevastopol; hundreds of men, with curses and prayers on their parched lips, crawled, squirmed and groaned, some among the corpses in the flowery valley, and others on the stretchers, beds and the blood-spattered floor of the dressing stations. And yet again, as on previous days, the lightning flashed over Sapun Hill, the twinkling stars waned, a white mist floated in from the dark, booming sea, the crimson dawn broke in the East, and long scarlet wisps of cloud drifted over the light blue horizon; and again, as on previous days, the almighty, glorious luminary rose, promising joy, love and happiness to the entire awakening world.

Next evening the Chasseur's band was again playing on the boulevard, and officers, cadets, soldiers and young women again strolled leisurely around the pavilion and along the lower avenues of fragrant white acacias.

Kalugin, Prince Galtsin and a colonel were walking arm in arm in the vicinity of the pavilion and exchanging impressions of the previous night's engagement. The subject of their conversation, as is usual in such circumstances, was not the battle itself, but the part each had played in it and the valour he had displayed. Their faces and voices were grave, almost mournful, as though the losses sustained the day before caused them much pain and sorrow. To tell the truth, however, since none of them had lost a dear one (has anybody a dear one amidst the conditions of war?), this sorrow was purely official, which they felt it their duty to display. Indeed, Kalugin and the colonel, splendid fellows though they were, would have been quite willing to witness battles of this kind every day, as long as they held out the prospect of a golden sword and promotion to Major-General. I love to hear a conqueror who destroys millions to gratify his ambitions called a monster. But ask Ensign Petrushov, or Lieutenant Antonov, or any of the others to give you their honest opinion; you'll find that each is a little Napoleon, a little monster, ready to start a battle and kill a hundred or so for the sake of another Star or an increase of one third in their pay.

"I beg your pardon," the colonel was saying, "it started on the left flank. *I was there myself!*"

"Perhaps," Kalugin replied. "*I was on the right most of the time—I went there twice. Once to look for the General, and the next time just to have a look at the lodgements. It was pretty hot there, believe me!*"

"Kalugin should know," Prince Galtsin said to the colonel. "You know, V. spoke to *me* about you today. He said you were splendid!"

"But the losses, the losses are simply dreadful," the colonel remarked in his officially mournful tone. "*In my regiment four hundred men were put out of action. It's a wonder I got out alive.*"

Just then the purplish figure of Mikhailov in his patched boots and his head swathed in bandages, appeared at the other end of the boulevard coming towards them. He felt greatly embarrassed when he caught sight of them: he recalled how he had ducked in Kalugin's presence the night before, and he was afraid they might think he was pretending he was wounded. Had those gentlemen not seen him, he would have turned back and gone home, and would have stayed home until he was able to discard his bandages.

"Il fallait voir dans quel état je l'ai rencontré hier sous le feu,"* said Kalugin with a smile as they drew level with each other.

"Are you wounded, Captain?" Kalugin asked with a smile which meant: "Well, did you see me last night? Wasn't I fine?"

"Only a scratch. I was grazed by a stone," Mikhailov replied, reddening, the expression on his face saying: "I saw you, and I must admit that you were wonderful, whereas I was simply disgusting."

"Est-ce que le pavillon est baissé déjà?"** asked Galtsin, again assuming his supercilious air, staring at the lieutenant-captain's cap and addressing no one in particular.

* You should have seen what a state he was in when I came across him under fire.

** Hasn't the flag been lowered yet?

"Non pas encore,"* Mikhailov answered, wishing to show that he understood and spoke French.

"Is the truce still on?" Galtsin courteously enquired of Mikhailov in Russian, as much as to say—or so the lieutenant-captain thought—"You must find it difficult to speak French; would it not, therefore, be better simply..." And with this the aides-de-camp left him.

As on the previous day, the lieutenant-captain felt lonely, and bowing to various gentlemen—some of whom he did not wish to join and others he did not venture to approach—he sat down by the Kazarsky Monument and lit a cigarette.

Baron Pest also appeared on the boulevard. He related how he had been present at the conclusion of the truce and had spoken with some French officers, one of whom, he alleged, had said to him: "*S'il n'avait pas fait claire encore pendant une demi heure, les embuscades auraient été reprises,*"** that he had replied: "*Monsieur! Je ne dis pas non, pour ne pas vous donner un démenti,*"*** and that it had been a very smart retort, etc.

Actually, however, although he had been present at the parley, he had not said anything witty, although he had very much wanted to talk to the Frenchmen (such fun talking to the Frenchmen!). Cadet Baron Pest had paced up and down the lines for a long time, asking the Frenchmen standing near him: "*De quel régiment êtes-vous?*"**** He was told and nothing more was said. When, however, he had gone too far down the lines, the French sentry, not suspecting that this soldier understood French, cursed him roundly in the third person: "*Il vien regarder nos*

* Not yet.

** Had it been dark for another half hour the lodgements would have been captured a second time.

*** Sir, I will not deny it simply because I don't want to contradict you.

**** What's your regiment?

travaux, ce sacré. . . .”* Loosing all further interest in the truce negotiations after this, Cadet Baron Pest set off for home, and only on the way did he think of the French phrases that he was now uttering. Strolling along the boulevard was also Lieutenant Zobov, speaking very loudly, Captain Obzhogov, looking quite dishevelled, the artillery-captain who fawned on no one, the cadet who was lucky in love, and all the others of the day before—all prompted by the same eternal impulses of falsehood, vanity and levity. The only ones absent were Praskukhin, Neferdov and several others, whom no one here scarcely remembered or thought of now, although their corpses had not yet been washed, laid out and buried; and whom their fathers and mothers and wives and children, if they had any, would forget as well, if they had not forgotten them already.

“I wouldn’t have recognized the old man,” said a soldier engaged in laying out corpses, lifting by the shoulders a body with a crushed chest, an enormous, bloated head, a glossy black face and rolled-up eyes. “Grab him by the back, Morozka, else he might come apart. Phew, what a stink!”

“Phew, what a stink!”—this was all that had remained among men of what had been a human being.

16

White flags are hung out on our bastion and the French trenches, and the blossoming valley between them is littered with heaps of mangled corpses, clothed in grey and blue, but minus their boots. These corpses are being picked up by labourers and loaded onto carts. The air is filled with the frightful stench of decaying bodies. Crowds have flocked out of Sevastopol and the French trenches to gaze at the sight, drawn to one another by avid and amiable curiosity.

* He’s going to look at our works, damn him!

Listen to what these people are saying among themselves. In a circle of Russians and Frenchmen who have gathered round him, a young officer, who speaks French imperfectly, but well enough to make himself understood, is examining a Guardsman's pouch.

"Ay sesi poorquah se wazo isi?"* he asks.

"Parce que c'est une giberne d'un régiment de la garde, Monsieur, qui porte l'aigle imperial."**

"Ay voo day la guard?"***

"Pardon, Monsieur, du 6-ème de ligne."****

"Ay sesi oo ashtay?"(*) the officer asks, pointing to the cigarette holder of yellow wood through which the Frenchman is smoking.

"A Balaclave, Monsieur! C'est tout simple—en bois de palme."(**)

"Joli!"(***) the officer says, guided in this conversation not so much by what he wants to say, as by the words he has at his command.

"Si vous voulez bien garder cela comme souvenir de cette rencohtre, vous m'obligerez,"(****) with that the polite Frenchman snuffs out his cigarette and hands the officer the cigarette holder with a slight bow. The officer hands him his own, and all present—Frenchmen and Russians—seem very pleased and smile.

* What's this bird here?

** This is the pouch of the Guards Regiment, sir. It bears the Imperial eagle.

*** And do you belong to the Guards?

**** No, I'm in the 6th Regiment of the Line.

(*) Where did you buy this?

(**) In Balaclava, sir. It is very simple—made of palmwood.

(***) Pretty!

(****) You will oblige me by accepting this as a souvenir of our meeting.



An infantryman, looking very smart in a pink shirt over which a coat is flung nonchalantly, approaches a Frenchman with some other soldiers, who line up behind him with their hands locked behind their backs and their faces aglow with mirth and curiosity, while he asks the Frenchman for a light for his pipe. The latter draws at his pipe, stirs up the contents of its bowl and pours some embers out for the Russian.

"*Bong, tobacco,*" says the soldier in the pink shirt, and the onlookers smile.

"*Oui, bon tabac, tabac turc,*" the Frenchman says, "*et chez vous tabac russe? bon?**"

"*Roos bong,*" the soldier in the pink shirt replies, while the spectators roll with laughter. "*Fransay no bong, bongjoor, moosiay,*" the soldier in the pink shirt says, and having fired off his entire stock of French at one shot, he pats the Frenchman on the stomach and laughs. The Frenchmen also laugh.

* Yes, it's good tobacco, it's Turkish. And is yours Russian? Is it good?

"Ils ne sont pas jolie, ces bêtes de russes?"* says a Zouave standing in the French crowd.

"De quoi de ce qu'ils rien donc?"** asks another swarthy man with an Italian accent, approaching our men.

"Kaftan bong," the smart soldier says, examining the Zouave's embroidered coat, and they laugh again.

"Ne sortez pas de la ligne, a vos places, sacre nom..."*** shouts a French corporal, and the soldiers reluctantly disperse.

In a ring of French officers stands a young cavalry officer of our's, spouting French barber shop slang. The conversation revolves around a certain "Comte Sazonoff, que j'ai beaucoup connu, m-r,"**** a French officer with one epaulette says. "C'est un de ces vrais comtes russes, comme nous les aimons."(*)

"Il y a un Sazonoff que j'ai connu," says the cavalryman. "mais il n'est pas comte, à moins que je sache, un petit brun de votre age à peu pres."(**)

"C'est ça, m-r, c'est lui. Oh, que je voudrais le voir, ce cher comte. Si vous le voyez, je vous pris bien de lui faire mes compliments. Capitaine Latour,"(***) he says with a bow.

"N'est ce pas terrible, la triste besogne que nous faisons? Ça chauffait cette nuit, n'est-ce pas?"(****) says the cavalry-

* Those Russian brutes aren't a bit good-looking.

** What are they laughing at?

*** Don't cross the line! Back you go, damn you!

**** Count Sazonoff, whom I knew very well, sir.

(*) He is one of those real Russian counts whom we so much admire.

(**) I knew a Sazonoff, but as far as I know, he is not a count: he's a little dark fellow, about your age.

(***) That's right, sir, it is he. Oh, how I would like to see the dear count! If you should see him, please be good enough to give him my regards. Captain Latour.

(****) This is an awful business we're engaged in, isn't it? It was hot last night, wasn't it?

man, wishing to keep the conversation going and pointing to the corpses.

"Oh, m-r, c'est affreux! Mais quels gaillards vos soldats, quels gaillards! C'est un plaisir que de se battre contre des gaillards comme eux."*

"Il faut avouer que les vôtres ne se mouchent pas du pied non plus,"** the cavalryman says, bowing and thinking he has been extremely witty. But enough.

Let us better look at this 10-year-old boy in an old cap (most likely his father's), shoes worn over unstockinged feet and nankeen trousers held up by a single brace, who from the moment the truce commenced came out from behind the ramparts and roamed up and down the hollow, staring with dull curiosity at the Frenchmen and at the corpses lying on the ground, and gathering the blue wild flowers which grew in such profusion in this fateful valley. On his way home, carrying a large bunch, he stopped near a group of prostrate bodies, and holding his nose to keep out the stench that was wafted by the wind he gazed at the ghastly headless corpse lying nearest to him. After standing there motionless for some time he moved a bit closer and touched the corpse's stiff outstretched arm with his foot. The arm swung slightly. He touched it again, this time more resolutely. The arm swung up and returned to its former position. The boy suddenly screamed, hid face in the flowers and ran as fast as his legs could carry him towards the fortress.

Yes, white flags are hung out on the bastions and over the trenches; the blossoming valley is filled with evil-smelling bodies, the glorious sun descends from the translucent sky towards the azure sea, and the azure sea, gently heaving, glitters in the

* Oh, air, it was frightful! But what fine fellows your soldiers are, what fine fellows! It is a pleasure to fight with such fine fellows.

** I must admit that your men also don't wipe their noses with their feet.

golden rays of the sun. Thousands of people meet in throngs, look, speak, and smile at each other. And these people—Christians preaching the same great law of love and self-sacrifice—seeing what they have done, will they not fall repentant on their knees before Him who, in giving them life, placed in the heart of each the fear of death and love of the good and the beautiful? Will they not embrace like brothers with tears of joy and happiness? No! The white rags are withdrawn—and again the instruments of death and misery emit their sinister howl, and again innocent and honest blood flows, and groans and oaths rend the air.

And now I have said what I wanted to say; but a grave doubt besets me. Perhaps I should not have said all this. Perhaps what I have said is one of those cruel truths which, unconsciously hidden in the heart of each of us, should not be uttered, lest it becomes harmful, like the dregs of wine which must not be disturbed so that the wine is not spoiled.

Where in this tale is the evil depicted which must be avoided? And where is the good which must be imitated? Who is the villain, and who the hero? All are good, and all are evil.

Neither Kalugin with his brilliant courage (*bravoure de gentilhomme*) and vanity, that incentive of everyone's behaviour, nor Praskukhin, vapid and harmless, although he fell *on the battlefield for faith, throne and fatherland*, nor Mikhailov with his timidity and narrowmindedness, nor Pest—a child without firm convictions or rules—can be the villain or the hero of this tale.

The hero of my tale, whom I love with all my heart and soul, whom I have tried to depict in all his beauty, and who always was, is and will be beautiful—is Truth.

June 26, 1855.

SEVASTOPOL
IN AUGUST 1855





SEVASTOPOL IN AUGUST 1855

I



AT THE END of August an officer's trap (the peculiar vehicle which is a cross between a Jewish *britska*, a Russian peasant's cart and a wicker basket, met with only in these parts), was slowly wending its way through the thick, hot dust the gorge-like road between Duvankoi* and Bakhchisarai.

In front, pulling at the reins, squatted an orderly in a nankeen coat and a shapeless cap that had once been an officer's:

* The last station before reaching Sevastopol.

in the back, perched on a heap of bundles and bags covered with a horsecloth, sat an infantry officer in a summer overcoat. As far as one could judge from his sitting position, the officer was rather short, but very stoutly-built—not broad-shouldered so much as deep-chested—he was broad and thickset; his neck was very muscular and at the back seemed drawn taut; of what is called a waist—the intake in the middle of the body—he had none, nor did he show signs of corpulence; on the contrary, he was lean, if anything, especially in the face, which had an unhealthy, sallow tan. His face would have been good-looking were it not for its puffiness and the large, soft wrinkles—not of age—which enlarged and blurred his features and gave his entire countenance a stale and coarse appearance. He had small, brown, animated, even insolent eyes, a short, very thick moustache which, evidently, he was in the habit of chewing, and his chin, and cheeks, especially the latter, were covered with a two days' growth of thick, black and very stiff bristle. The officer had been wounded in the head by a splinter on May 10 and was still wearing a bandage, but having felt quite fit for over a week, he was now returning from the hospital in Simferopol to his regiment, which was stationed somewhere in the region of the firing, whether in Sevastopol itself, on the North Side, or at Inkerman, he had not yet been able to ascertain. The firing could now be heard distinctly, frequently, and seemingly quite close, especially when he reached gaps in the mountains and the wind was blowing his way. Now an explosion rent the air, making one start instinctively; now less violent sounds, in rapid succession like the beating of a drum were heard, sometimes interrupted by an astonishing rumble; now everything merged in a rolling crash like peals of thunder at the height of a thunderstorm, when the rain has just come down in torrents. Everybody was saying, and indeed one could hear, that a terrific bombardment was on. The officer urged his orderly on, seemingly anx-

ious to reach his destination as quickly as possible. From the opposite direction came a large wagon in which some Russian muzhiks were riding; they had carted provisions to Sevastopol and were now on their way back with a party of wounded and sick soldiers in grey overcoats, sailors in black coats, Greek volunteers in red fezes, and bearded militiamen. The officer's trap was forced to stop, and the officer, screwing up his eyes and frowning in the dust that hung in a motionless thick cloud over the road, got into his eyes and ears and clung to his perspiring face, stared with sullen indifference at the faces of the sick and wounded moving past him.

"That feeble little fellow over there's from our company," the orderly said, turning round to his master and pointing to the wagon filled with wounded, which by this time had drawn level with them.

In the front of the wagon, sitting sideways, was a bearded Russian in a lambswool hat plaiting the lash of a whip, the handle of which he held against his side with his elbow. Behind him were five or six men in various postures, swaying this way and that with the jolting of the cart. One of them, his arm in a sling made of a piece of rope and his coat flung over his shoulders revealing a very soiled shirt, was cheerfully sitting upright in the middle of the wagon, although his face was thin and pale, and was just about to pull off his cap on catching sight of the officer, when, evidently, remembering that he was wounded, he pretended that he only wanted to scratch his head. Another soldier, next to him, was lying in the bottom of the cart; all that was visible of him were his two emaciated hands with which he gripped the sides of the cart, and his raised knees, which swayed from side to side like bundles of bast. A third, with a swollen face and bandaged head, on top of which a soldier's cap was perched, was sitting on the side of the cart with his legs dangling over the wheels, and seemed to be dozing

with his elbows resting on his knees. It was to him the officer addressed himself.

"Dolzchnikov!" he shouted.

"Present!" barked the startled soldier in a deep bass voice that sounded as if twenty men had replied, opening his eyes and whipping off his cap.

"When were you wounded, my lad?"

The soldier's leaden, bleary eyes brightened; evidently he had recognized his officer.

"Wish you health, Your Honour!" he barked again in the same bass voice.

"Where's our regiment now?"

"It was in Sevastopol, Your Honour. They wanted to shift it on Wednesday."

"Where to?"

"I don't know. To the North Side, perhaps, Your Honour! Today, Your Honour," he added in a drawl, replacing his cap, "he's firing all over the place ... and using shells more than anything. You can even hear them in the bay. He's firing like the devil ..."

What the soldier said further could not be heard, but from the expression on his face and from his posture one could judge that he was speaking with the bitterness of one who was suffering, and that what he was saying was not consoling.

The officer, Lieutenant Kozeltsov, was a man rather out of the ordinary. He was not one of those who live in a particular way, who do this and don't do that because others live and act that way; he did whatever he liked, while others did what he did, and were sure that what they were doing was right. He was fairly well endowed by nature. He was by no means stupid, and possessed talent; he sang well, played the guitar, spoke with animation and wrote with ease—especially official reports, in which he had become quite skilled during the period he had

been Regimental Adjutant; but the most remarkable thing about him was his egotistic vigour, which, though springing mainly from these minor talents, was in itself a strong and striking feature. His was an egotism of the kind which is so thoroughly merged with life, so often found among males, and, particularly among military men, that he saw no alternative but to lead or die; his egotism prompted even his innermost impulses; when alone he liked to dominate over those with whom he mentally compared himself.

"Ha! What's the use of listening to Moskva's* tittle-tattle?" the lieutenant muttered, conscious of the weight of apathy that oppressed his heart and of the nebulous thoughts that oppressed his mind after seeing the wagonload of wounded and hearing the soldier's words, the significance of which was magnified and confirmed for him by the sound of the firing. "*Funny old Moskva*. . . . Come on, Nikolayev, get a move on! . . . Have you fallen asleep?" he added, turning on his orderly rather crossly and straightening the skirts of his coat.

Nikolayev tugged at the reins, clicked his tongue and the trap rolled on at a swift trot.

"We'll stop for a moment to feed the horses and then go on further. tonight," said the officer.

As his trap turned into a street of shattered stone walls of Tatar houses in Duvankoi, Lieutenant Kozeltsov was again held up by a train of carts loaded with shells and cannon balls going towards Sevastopol and blocking the road. The trap was obliged to stop.

* In many infantry regiments the officers refer partly in endearment and partly in contempt to the private as *Moskva*, or *prisyaga* (oath of allegiance).

Two infantry men were sitting amidst the dust, on the stones of a broken wall by the roadside, eating watermelon with bread.

"Going far, matey?" one of them asked as he munched his bread of a soldier with a small knapsack slung across his back who had stopped near by.

"We're on our way to the company from the gubernia," replied the soldier, looking away from the melon and shifting the knapsack on his back. For nigh on three weeks we've been getting in the hay for the company, and now we've all been called back, but we don't know where the regiment is. Some say it moved to Korabelnaya last week. Have you any idea where it is, gentlemen?"

"It's in town, brother, in town," said the infantryman, an old *furschtadt* soldier, digging his claspknife into an unripe, whitish watermelon with relish. "We left the place only at midday. It's hot there, my lad. I'd advise you to keep away. Drop down somewhere here in the hay and lie low for a day or two—it'll be better for you."

"But why, gentlemen?"

"Can't you hear them firing all over the place? There's not a whole spot left anywhere. As for our lads—so many have been killed that you can't count them."

The speaker waved his hand hopelessly and gave his cap a twist.

The passing soldier shook his head thoughtfully, clicked his tongue several times, pulled his pipe out of his boot top and stirring the scorched tobacco in it without adding any fresh, lit a bit of tinder at the other soldier's pipe and, raising his cap, said:

"We're in God's hands, gentlemen. Begging your pardon!" Then, straightening his knapsack, he trudged down the road.

"Eh, better wait here!" the one with the melon drawled persuasively.



"It makes no difference," muttered the other, as he squeezed his way between the carts that crowded the road. "From what people are saying it looks as if I'd better buy a watermelon for supper."

The station was packed when Kozeltsov drove up to the porch. The first person he encountered was the stationmaster, a lean fellow of youthful appearance, quarreling with a couple of officers who were following at his heels.

"You'll have to wait not three days but ten, perhaps! Even generals have to wait, my dear sir!" the stationmaster was saying, trying to be nasty to the travellers. "You don't expect me to harness myself, do you?"

"If there's a shortage of horses then nobody should get any! . . . Why was one given to that servant with the baggage?" shouted the older of the two officers, who held a glass of tea

in his hand and, evidently, had deliberately avoided using the pronoun, insinuating, however, that for two pins he would address the stationmaster in the contemptuous "thou."

"But be reasonable, Mr. Stationmaster," stammered his companion, a youthful little officer. "We're not travelling for pleasure. We too must be needed out there if we were called up. I shall complain to General Kramer about it, believe me I will. Really, you know, it looks to me as if you have no respect for officers!"

"You always spoil everything!" the older officer interjected angrily. "You are only hindering me. You've got to know how to talk to these people. He certainly has lost all respect now. . . . Horses, I say! This very minute!"

"I'd be glad to let you have them, my dear sir, but where am I to take them from?"

The stationmaster was silent for a few moments, then he suddenly flared up and gesticulating wildly, said:

"I understand you sir, perfectly, but what can I do? If I get (here the faces of the officers brightened with hope) . . . a chance of lasting out the month here—you'll not find me here after that. I'd rather be on Malakhov Kurgan than here. On my word of honour! Let them do as they please, since they issue orders like this. There isn't a single sound vehicle in the whole station, and the horses haven't seen a wisp of hay for three days."

With this the stationmaster vanished through the gate.

Kozeltsov entered the waiting room together with the officers.

"Well," said the older officer to the younger quite coolly, although a moment before he had seemed to be fuming with rage, "we've been travelling for three months, so I suppose we can wait a little longer. Nothing terrible will happen. We'll get there eventually."

The filthy, smoky waiting room was so crowded with officers and valises that Kozeltsov could only with difficulty find himself a place on the windowsill. While studying the faces round him and listening to the conversation he rolled a cigarette. To the right of the door, near a rickety greasy table on which there were two brass samovars, spotted with verdigris, and some pieces of sugar lying on scraps of paper, was gathered the largest group of officers; a beardless young officer wearing a new quilted coat, evidently made from a lady's dressing gown, was refilling the teapot. Another four equally young officers were in different corners of the room. One of them was sleeping on a sofa, with a winter coat propped under his head; another, standing at a table, was cutting a slice of roast mutton for an officer with one arm who was sitting at the table. Two officers, one wearing the greatcoat of an aide-de-camp and the other a light infantry coat with a pouch suspended from a strap slung over his shoulder, were sitting on a bench; from the way they looked at the others and the manner in which the one with the pouch was smoking his cigar it was plain that they were not frontline infantry officers and were quite pleased with the fact. It was not that there was any superciliousness in their manner; it was their smug *sang froid*, due partly to money and partly to their intimacy with generals—a consciousness of superiority so great that they tried to conceal it. A thick-lipped surgeon, still young, and an artillery officer with a German face were sitting almost on the legs of the young officer sleeping on the sofa and counting their money. Four orderlies—one dozing and the others fussing with the valises and bundles near the door, completed the group. In all this crowd Kozeltsov failed to find a single familiar face, but he listened to the conversation going on around him with the utmost interest. He liked the look of the young officers, who, as he immediately surmised from their appearance, had come straight from the Cadet Corps,

and, chiefly, they reminded him of his brother, who was also in the corps and was due to arrive at one of the batteries of Sevastopol in a few days' time. But everything about the officer with the pouch, whose face, he thought, he had seen before, struck him as repugnant and insolent. As he passed from the window to the bench and sat down on it, the thought even flashed through his mind: "I'll put him in his place if he dares to say anything." Like the genuine frontline man and good officer that he was, Kozeltsov not only disliked, but detested all Staff officers, as he at once judged these officers to be.

4

"It's really too bad to be stranded here, now that we're so near the place," said one of the young officers. "There may be an engagement tonight, and we won't be there."

In the high-pitched voice and the flush that appeared like patches on the young face of this officer as he spoke, could be discerned the charming youthful bashfulness of one who is afraid that his words were not sounding exactly right.

The one-armed officer looked at him with a smile.

"You'll get there eventually, believe me," he said.

The young officer glanced respectfully at the emaciated face of the one-armed man that had suddenly lit up with a smile, fell silent, and went on with his teamaking. Indeed, the face of the one-armed officer, his bearing and particularly his empty coat sleeve expressed much of that cool unconcern which created the impression that under all circumstances—in battle or in conversation—he looked as if he would say: "All that's very fine! I know all about that! I can do anything if only I have a mind to!"

"Well, what shall we do?" said the young officer, turning to his comrade in the padded coat. "Shall we spend the night here, or go on *our own* horse?"

His comrade said he preferred to stay.

"Just imagine, Captain," continued the officer who was pouring out the tea, addressing the one-armed officer and picking up the knife the other had dropped, "we were told that horses were awfully dear in Sevastopol, so we bought a horse between us in Simferopol."

"They must have made you pay a pretty stiff price for it."

"I really can't say, Captain. We paid ninety rubles for the horse and trap. Is that very dear?" he added, addressing everyone, as well as Kozeltsov, who was looking at him.

"Not if the horse is young," said Kozeltsov.

"Really? And we were told it was dear. . . . She's a bit lame, that's true, but we were told it would pass. Otherwise she's quite sound."

"What corps are you from?" asked Kozeltsov, who wanted to hear something about his brother.

"We've just come from the Nobleman's Regiment; there are six of us, all volunteers," said the loquacious young officer. "Only we don't know where our batteries are. Some say in Sevastopol, but he says they're in Odessa."

"Couldn't you find out in Simferopol?" asked Kozeltsov.

"Nobody knew. . . . Just imagine. One of our comrades went to one of the offices there and they were very rude to him. . . . You can imagine how unpleasant that was. . . . Would you like a cigarette?" he asked the one-armed officer who had just reached for his cigarette case.

He seemed to serve the officer with obsequious awe.

"So you also are from Sevastopol?" he continued. "Wonderful! If you only knew how much we in Petersburg thought about you, and about all our heroes!" he said, turning to Kozeltsov with a kind and respectful smile.

"Perhaps you will have to go back," the lieutenant said.

"That's just what we are afraid of. Just imagine! We have spent so much on the horse and other kit—spirit-lamp, coffee-pot and other little necessities, that we have completely run out of money," he said in a low voice glancing at his comrade. "If we have to go back we don't know what we shall do!"

"But didn't you receive a travelling allowance?" Kozeltsov asked.

"No," the other replied in a whisper. "They promised to give us something here."

"Have you a certificate?"

"I know that the certificate is the chief thing, but a Senator in Moscow—an uncle of mine—told me when I went to see him that I'd get the money here; otherwise he'd have given me some. Do you think I'll get it without a certificate?"

"Of course you will!"

"I too think that, perhaps, I'll get it without," said the young officer in a tone that indicated that having asked the same question at thirty other stations and having received different answers, he was not inclined to believe anyone now.

"They've got to give it you!" suddenly said the officer who had quarrelled with the stationmaster on the porch, walking up to the group and addressing himself partly to the Staff officers sitting nearby, as being more worthy of his attention. "Why, I myself, like these gentlemen here, volunteered for active service, and even left a good position to go straight to Sevastopol. And all I received was a hundred and thirty-six rubles silver for travelling from P. and I've already spent over a hundred and fifty rubles of my own. Think of it! It has taken me over two months to travel eight hundred versts. I've been travelling over a month with these gentlemen. It's a good thing

I had some money of my own. But what would have happened if I hadn't any?"

"Over two months, eh?" somebody asked.

"What could I do?" continued the other. "If I hadn't wanted to go I wouldn't have given up a good position; and I didn't dally on the road because I was afraid. . . . It was impossible to make any progress. In Perekop, for example, I was held up for two weeks; and the stationmaster wouldn't even speak to me—'Leave whenever you like,' he says, 'look how many couriers are on the waiting list.' Just my luck, I suppose. . . . I wanted to push on, but I had no luck. It's not that I'm afraid of the bombardment, it's just that it makes no difference whether you hurry or not. . . . And I so much wanted. . . ."

The officer was so eager to explain the reasons for his delay and seemed to be excusing himself so earnestly that one could not help thinking that he was funkng a bit. This became still more marked when he inquired about the whereabouts of his regiment and whether it was dangerous there. He even turned pale and his voice broke when the one-armed officer, who belonged to that regiment, told him that during the past two days it had lost no fewer than seventeen officers.

Indeed, at that particular moment the officer was an awful coward, although he was far from being one six months ago. He had undergone a change that many have undergone both before and after him. He had lived in one of our gubernias where there is a Cadet Corps, and had occupied a good and comfortable position, but after reading in the newspapers and in private letters about the exploits of the heroes of Sevastopol, his former comrades, he suddenly became fired with ambition and to a larger extent with patriotism.

To this sentiment he had sacrificed a great deal: his comfortable position, his apartment with its upholstered furniture which he had acquired after eight years of effort, his acquaint-

ances and his hopes of marrying a lady of means. He threw this all up and as far back as February had volunteered for active service, having visions of immortal glory and generals' epaulettes. Two months after he had sent in his application he received an inquiry from Headquarters as to whether he would require an allowance from the government. He wrote back to say that he would not and waited patiently for an appointment, although his patriotic ardour had already abated considerably during the two months. Another two months later he received another inquiry as to whether he was a Free Mason and other formalities of the same kind, and after replying in the negative he, at last, in the fifth month, received his appointment. Meanwhile, his friends, and, chiefly, that inner feeling of irritation with the new that comes whenever one changes one's condition, had convinced him that he had been an utter fool to join the army on active service. And when he found himself alone at the Fifth Station suffering from heartburn and with a face grimy with dust, and there met a courier from Sevastopol who told him all about the horrors of the war, and after waiting twelve hours for a change of horses, he utterly repented of his foolishness, pictured with vague horror the experiences that awaited him and continued on his journey in a daze like a victim going to the slaughter. During the three months of his journeying from station to station, at nearly everyone of which he was held up, and where he met officers from Sevastopol who told hair-raising stories, this feeling steadily grew until the poor officer changed from the reckless hero he had pictured himself in P. to the miserable coward he was in Duvankoi, and now, having joined, a month ago, the group of young officers who were travelling from the Cadet Corps, he tried to drag out the journey as long as possible; and regarding these as the last days of his life, he, at each station, unfolded his camp bed, unpacked his provisions, played preference, read the

complaint book as a pastime and rejoiced when he was refused horses.

He really would have been a hero had he gone to the bastions straight from P.; but now he was to experience much mental torment before he could become the cool, patient man in toil and in danger that we are accustomed to see in the Russian officer. But it was already a difficult matter to resurrect his enthusiasm.

"Who asked for borshch?" enquired the hostess of the inn, a fat, rather slovenly woman of about 40, entering the room with a tureen of hot cabbage soup.

The talk immediately ceased and everybody in the room turned their eyes on the woman. The officer from P. even winked at the young officer and nodded in her direction.

"Oh, it was Kozeltsov," said the young officer. "We'd better wake him up. Get up—dinner's ready," he said, going up to the sofa and shaking the sleeper's shoulder.

A lad of about 17, with merry black eyes and pink cheeks, jumped up with alacrity and, rubbing his eyes, stepped into the middle of the room.

"Oh, sorry!" he said in a silvery voice to the doctor whom he had jostled in rising.

Lieutenant Kozeltsov immediately recognized his brother and stepped up to him.

"Don't you recognize me?" he said with a smile.

"O-o-oh! What a surprise!" the younger brother exclaimed, running to embrace his brother.

They kissed three times, but at the third kiss they stopped short as if the same thought had occurred to them both: Why three times?

"I'm so glad," said the elder of the two gazing at his brother. "Let's go out on the porch."

"Yes, yes, let's go. . . . I don't want any borshch . . . you have it, Federson," he said to his comrade.

"But you were hungry."

"No, I don't want anything."

Out on the porch the younger brother kept asking the older one: "Well, how are you? How have you been getting on? Tell me all about it," and saying how glad he was to see him; but he said nothing about himself.

After about five minutes, when a pause occurred in the conversation, the elder brother asked why the younger had not entered the Guards, as "our folks" had expected him to.

"Oh, yes!" the other replied blushing at the very recollection. "I was terribly upset about it, but I had no idea it would turn out like this. Imagine! Just before the examinations three of us went out for a smoke—you know, in that room behind the porter's cubbyhole. You must have done the same in your time. Well, that brute of a porter spotted us and ran off to tell the officer on duty (and we had tipped the fellow several times, too), and the officer came snooping round. As soon as we caught sight of him the other two threw their cigarettes away and dashed through the side door; but I was too late. He got nasty with me, I sauced him a bit, he went and complained to the Inspector and that started the ball rolling. The result was that I didn't get my full conduct marks—although I got full marks in all other subjects—except for mechanics for which I got 12. The result was that I was given a commission in a line regiment with a promise that I would be transferred to the Guards later. But I was fed up and applied to be sent to the front."

"So that's how it happened!"

"Really, you know, joking aside, I was so sick of everything that all I wanted was to get to Sevastopol as quickly as



possible. As a matter of fact, with a stroke of luck, I may gain more here than in the Guards. I'd have had to wait ten years before I became a colonel, whereas out here Totleben jumped from lieutenant colonel to general in two years. Well, if I get killed—there's nothing to be done about it!"

"So that's the sort of fellow you are!" his brother said, smiling.

"But you know, brother," the younger one continued, smiling and blushing as if he were about to say something to be ashamed of, "all this is mere piffle. My chief reason for applying to be sent to the front was that I felt ashamed to be living in Petersburg when men were dying for our country out here. And besides, I wanted to be with you," he added, still more shyly.

"You are a funny fellow!" the older brother said, reaching for his cigarette case and avoiding the other's eyes. It's a pity, though, that we won't be together."

"But tell me, is it really so frightful on the bastions?" the younger brother suddenly asked.

"It is at first, but it's not so bad when you get used to it. You'll see for yourself."

"There's another thing I wanted to ask you: Do you think they'll capture Sevastopol? I think they'll never succeed."

"God knows."

"There's only one thing that vexes me. We had an awful stroke of bad luck on our way here—one of our bags was stolen, and I had my shako in it. I'm in a terrible predicament now—I don't know how I'm going to present myself. We have a new style of shako now—and there's lots of other changes—all for the better. I can tell you all about it.... I was all over Moscow....

Kozeltsov Junior—Vladimir—closely resembled his brother Mikhail, but the resemblance was that of an opening rosebud to a withered briar rose. His hair was as fair, but thick and curly at the temples. A light tuft grew at the nape of his soft white neck—a sign of good luck as nursemaids say. A healthy flush did not suffuse, but appeared and vanished from his fair fresh cheeks, betraying every emotion he felt. His eyes were like his brother's, only more open and brighter, and, moreover, they glistened with the humidity that appeared in them now and again. A soft down grew on his cheeks and over his red lips, which often opened in a shy smile, disclosing white glistening teeth. Standing before his brother—slim, broad-shouldered, his coat unbuttoned, revealing a red shirt with a standing collar, a cigarette between his fingers, leaning on the railing of the porch and his face and gestures expressing naive joy—he presented such a picture of a charming, good-looking boy, that one could not tear one's eyes from him. He was tremendously pleased to see his brother and regarded him with pride and awe, for he pictured him a hero; but in some respects—as re-

gards worldly education, which, truth to tell, he lacked himself, ability to speak French and behave in good society, dancing and so forth, he was a little ashamed of him, looked down upon him, and even hoped to educate him if that were possible. He was still full of the impressions of Petersburg, of the house of a certain lady who was fond of handsome young men and had invited him to her home on holidays, and of the house of the Senator in Moscow, where he had once danced at a grand ball.

Having almost talked their fill and arriving finally at that state often reached when you find that you have little in common although you love each other, the brothers fell silent and a rather long pause ensued.

"Well, collect your things and we'll leave at once," the older brother said.

The younger brother suddenly blushed and hesitated.

"What, straight to Sevastopol?" he asked after a moment's silence.

"Why, of course. You haven't much baggage; I think we can get it all in."

"That's fine! Let's go at once," said the younger man with a sigh and went into the room.

But he halted in the passage and without opening the door he hung his head sadly and reflected:

"We're going straight to Sevastopol. Right into that inferno. It's ghastly. Oh well, it makes no difference. I'd have to go there some time. Now, at least, I'll be with my brother...."

Only now, at the thought that once he got into the trap he would not alight from it until he arrived in Sevastopol, and that no accident could prevent this, did he clearly picture the danger which he had sought; he shivered, frightened by its

proximity. Calming himself as best he could, he entered the room, but a quarter of an hour passed and still he did not rejoin his brother, so that the latter at last opened the door to call him. Kozeltsov Junior, with very much the air of a guilty schoolboy, was talking about something to the officer from P. When his brother opened the door he became quite flustered.

"I'll be out in a moment!" he said, waving his hand at his brother. "Please wait for me out there."

He did come out a moment later and approached his brother with a deep sigh.

"Really, I can't come with you now, brother," he said.

"Why? What's this nonsense?"

"I'll tell you the whole truth, Misha! None of us has any money left, and we are all in debt to that lieutenant-captain from P. It's an awful nuisance!"

The older brother frowned and kept silent for a long time.

"Do you owe him much?" he asked, looking sternly at his brother.

"Quite a lot.... No, not very much. I'm so ashamed. He paid for me at three stations, and we used his sugar all the time ... so I really don't know.... Oh, and we played preference ... so I owe him quite a bit."

"This is a bad business, Volodia! What would you have done if you had not met me?" the other said gravely, glancing away from his brother.

"Well, I thought I'd get that travelling allowance in Sevastopol and would be able to pay. I could do that, couldn't I? So I'd better go with him tomorrow."

The older brother pulled out his purse and with slightly trembling fingers picked out two ten-ruble notes and one three-ruble note.

"This is all the money I have," he said. "How much do you owe?"

In saying that this was all the money he had Kozeltsov was not quite telling the truth; he had four gold pieces sewn up in the cuff of his coat in case of emergency and had pledged himself not to touch them.

It turned out that in all—counting the preference and the sugar—Kozeltsov Junior owed the officer from P. only eight rubles. His brother gave him the amount, observing only that it was not the thing to play preference when one had no money.

“What stakes did you play for?”

The younger brother made no reply. His brother's question seemed to cast aspersions upon his honesty. His annoyance with himself, the shame he felt for an act that could evoke distrust and insult from his brother whom he loved so much, made such a painful impression upon his sensitive nature that he remained silent, feeling that he would be unable to restrain the sobs that were rising in his throat. He took the money without looking at it and returned to his comrades.

8

After refreshing himself in Duvankoi with two tots of vodka which he bought from a soldier on the bridge, Nikolayev tugged at the reins and the little trap bumped over the stony and here and there shady road that wound along the Belbek towards Sevastopol, while the brothers, jostling each other's knees, sat in obstinate silence, although not ceasing to think of each other for a moment.

“Why did he have to insult me?” thought the younger man. “Couldn't he have refrained from speaking about it? It looked as if he thought I were a thief, and I think he's still angry with me. I'm afraid we've fallen out for good. But how fine it would be if we could be in Sevastopol together. Two brothers, fast friends, and both fighting the enemy: one of them already

advanced in age, lacking education, perhaps, but a brave soldier nonetheless, and the other—a young man, but a fine fellow too. . . . Within a week I'd have shown that I'm not so very young! I'll even stop blushing: my face will express courage and I'll have a moustache, not large, perhaps, but quite a good size," and he plucked at a tuft of down showing at the corners of his mouth. "Perhaps we'll arrive this evening and go into action at once, the two of us. He must be one of the stubborn sort and very brave—talks little but excels in everything. I'd like to know," he went on "whether he is pressing me to the very edge of the trap deliberately or not? He must know that I'm uncomfortable and is only pretending to ignore me. And so we'll arrive in the evening," he went on, hugging the corner of the trap and trying not to move lest his brother might notice his discomfort, "and go straight to the bastion—I with the guns, and brother with his company and we'll set out together. And then the French will suddenly attack us. I'll shoot like blazes and kill an awful lot; but they'll keep on coming straight at me. I won't be able to shoot any more—it will be all up with me—but suddenly brother will dash up with his sabre and I'll seize a musket and both of us will advance together with the soldiers. Then the French will hurl themselves on brother. I'll run up, kill one Frenchman, then another and save him. I'll get hurt in the arm, but I'll grab the musket with the other hand and run on. Just then, brother will be killed by a bullet right at my side. I'll stop for a moment, look down at him sadly, then get up and cry, 'Follow me, let us avenge him! I loved my brother more than anything in the world,' I'll say, and now I've lost him. Let's avenge him and annihilate the enemy or die!' Everybody will raise a shout and follow me. Now the entire French army will come out, with Pellisier himself. We'll wipe them out to a man, but I'll be struck again, and a third time, and I'll fall mortally wounded. Everybody will come

running up; Gorchakov will come and ask me if there's anything I want. I'll say I don't want anything except to be laid next to my brother—I want to die beside him. I'll be carried away and placed next to the gory corpse of my brother. I'll rise up on my elbow and say only a few words: 'Yes, you failed to appreciate two men who really loved their country; now both have fallen . . . may God forgive you!' And with that I'll die."

Who knows how much of this dream will come true?

"Have you been in a hand-to-hand scrap?" he suddenly asked his brother, forgetting that he hadn't wanted to speak to him.

"No, not once," the older brother answered. "Our regiment has lost 2,000 men, all engaged on fortification work. I was also wounded in the same way. War is not waged a bit as you think, Volodia!"

The word "Volodia" touched the younger man; he wanted to have it out with his brother, who was quite unaware of the fact that he had offended him.

"You're not angry with me, are you, Misha?" he asked after a pause.

"What for?"

"No—I'm just asking. For what happened between us. It's nothing really."

"Not in the least," the older man replied, turning towards his brother and patting his leg.

"Forgive me, Misha, if I have done anything to vex you," said the younger brother, turning away to hide the tears that suddenly welled up in his eyes.

"Is this Sevastopol already?" the younger brother asked when they reached the top of a hill and there opened before them the bay bristling with ships' masts, the sea with the enemy

fleet in the distance, the white shore batteries, the barracks, water mains, docks and city buildings, and the white and purplish smoke that steadily rose up the sides of the yellow hills that surrounded the city and hovered in the blue sky in the pink rays of the sun, which was already brilliantly reflected in and descending to the dark horizon of the sea.

Volodia gazed without a tremor at this frightful place of which he had thought so much; on the contrary, he gazed at this truly charming and novel scene with a feeling of aesthetic pleasure and heroic pride, knowing that he would be there within the next half hour; and he continued to gaze at it with rapt attention until they reached Severnaya and the baggage train of his brother's regiment, where they were to ascertain the whereabouts of the regiment and the batteries.

The officer in charge of the baggage train had his quarters near what was called the *new town*—a series of hutments for married sailors' families—in a tent adjoining a fairly large shack built of green oak twigs which had not yet quite dried.

The brothers found the officer in the shack, sitting in a yellowish dirty shirt at a folding table—on which there was a glass of cold tea with cigarette ash floating on the surface and a tray with a bottle of vodka, grains of dry caviar and breadcrumbs—counting up a big pile of assignats with the aid of a large abacus. But before dealing with the officer's personality and his manner of speech, we must first examine more closely the interior of his shack and learn something of his mode of life and occupation. The new shack was spacious, stoutly built and comfortably furnished with small tables and benches built up of turf, such as are made only for generals and regimental commanders. To prevent the leaves from fluttering down the walls and ceiling were hung with three extremely ugly, but new and doubtlessly expensive carpets. On the iron bedstead that stood beneath the largest carpet which had an



Amazon depicted on it, lay a bright red plush blanket, a soiled and tattered leather pillow, and a racoon fur coat; on the table there was a mirror in a silver frame, an exceedingly filthy silver-backed brush, a horn comb with broken teeth clogged with greasy wisps of hair, a silver candlestick, a bottle of liqueur with a large red and gold label, a gold clock with a portrait of Peter I, two gold rings, a box containing capsules of some kind, a crust of bread and several scattered old playing cards; under the bed there were a number of full and empty bottles of porter. This officer was in charge of the regimental baggage train and the fodder supplies. With him lived, an old crony of his, a commissioner who was also engaged in operations of some kind. When the brothers entered the shack the commissioner was asleep in the tent; the officer was making up the regimental accounts as it was nearing the end of the month. Tall, with a long moustache and noble portliness, the baggage train officer cut a handsome, soldierly figure. The only unpleasant thing about him was his sweaty, bloated face in which his small grey eyes were almost concealed (he looked as

if he were filled up with porter) and his extreme slovenliness from his thin, oily hair to his large feet, which were stuck in a pair of ermine slippers.

"My! What a pile of money!" exclaimed Kozeltsov Senior on entering the shack, casting his eyes with involuntary greed upon the heap of assignats. "If only I could get a loan of half that sum, Vasili Mikhailich!"

At the sight of his guests the baggage train officer shrank as if he had been caught in the act of stealing and, gathering up the money, he bowed without rising.

"Och, if it were mine, . . . but it's government money, brother! And who is this with you?" said the officer, slipping the money into a cashbox at his elbow and looking straight at Volodia.

"This is my brother—just arrived from the Cadet Corps. We've dropped in to find out where the regiment is stationed."

"Be seated, gentlemen," the other said, and, without any further remark, he rose from the table and went into the adjoining tent. "Would you like a drink? Some porter, perhaps?" he called from there.

"It wouldn't do any harm, Vasili Mikhailich!"

Volodia was impressed by the magnificence of the baggage train officer, his nonchalant manner, and the respect with which his brother spoke to him.

"He must be a very good officer whom everybody respects. No doubt unassuming, brave and hospitable," he thought, timidly and humbly seating himself on the sofa.

"Well, where is our regiment?" the older brother asked, speaking across to the tent.

"What?"

He repeated his question.

"Zeifer was here today and told me that it moved to the 5th Bastion yesterday."

"Are you sure?"

"If I say so, it must be so. But the devil knows! He needs no prodding to tell a lie. Well, will you have some porter?" the baggage train officer asked, still speaking from the tent.

"Yes, I think I will," said Kozeltsov.

"What about you, Osip Ignatyevich?" the voice in the tent went on, evidently addressing the sleeping commissioner. "You've slept long enough; it's past seven!"

"What are you bothering me for! I'm not asleep," came a thin, lazy voice with a pleasant guttural in pronouncing the l's and r's.

"Well, get up! It's dull without you."

With this the baggage train officer returned to his guests.

"Bring some porter! Simferopol!" he called.

An orderly with a haughty mien, or so it appeared to Volodia, entered the shack, and pushing the officer aside, brought out a bottle of porter from under the bed.

"Yes, brother," said the baggage train officer, filling the glasses. "We have a new regimental commander now. He needs lots of money. He wants to buy everything."

"Oh, I suppose this one is a special type, one of the new generation," said Kozeltsov, respectfully taking up his glass.

"Yes, the new generation! He's as stingy as the rest. When he commanded a battalion he used to yell like mad, but now he's singing a different tune. That's not right, brother."

"I agree with you."

The younger brother understood nothing of what they were talking about, but he had a vague feeling that his brother was not saying what he thought, and was talking like that only because he was drinking the officer's porter."

The bottle was now empty and the conversation had been running on the same lines for quite a considerable time when the flap of the tent was flung aside and a short, fresh complex-

ioned man in a dark blue satin dressing gown with tassels and a cap with a red band and cockade, came in. As he entered he smoothed his small black moustache, stared at some point on the carpet and replied to the officers' greetings with a barely perceptible movement of his shoulders.

"Let me have a glass," he said, sitting down at the table. "Are you from St. Petersburg, young man?" he asked, addressing Volodia in a kindly tone.

"Yes, sir, I'm on my way to Sevastopol."

"Did you volunteer?"

"Yes, sir."

"What makes you do that, I really can't understand, gentlemen," continued the commissioner. "I'd set out for Petersburg on foot if they'd let me go. I'm fed up with this dog's life, by God I am!"

"What have you to complain about?" the older Kozeltsov asked, turning to the commissioner. "You should be having a good time here!"

The commissioner stared at him and turned away.

"It's the danger ('what danger can he be talking about quartered here in Severnaya," thought Kozeltsov), the privation—can't get a thing," the other continued, addressing himself, as before, to Volodia. "Why you want to come here, I really can't understand, gentlemen! If there was anything to be gained by it, I could understand; but to come just like that! Is there any fun in being made a cripple for life at your age?"

"Some seek gain and others serve for honour!" Kozeltsov Senior interjected again with a note of vexation in his voice.

"Where's the honour when there's nothing to eat!" the commissioner said with a contemptuous laugh, turning to the baggage train officer, who also laughed. "Put something on out of 'Lucia,' you'll enjoy it," he said, pointing to a music box. "I'm so fond of it..."

"Is he an honest man, that Vasili Mikhailich?" Volodia asked his brother when they left the shack at dusk and rode off to Sevastopol.

"He's all right, only he's awfully stingy. Why, he gets at least 300 rubles a month, and yet he lives like a pig. You've seen that yourself. As for that commissioner, I can't bear the sight of him. I'll give him a thrashing one of these days. Why, the cad brought as much as 12,000 rubles from Turkey. . . ."

And Kozeltsov went on to dilate on the subject of usury somewhat in the wrathful tone of one who (to tell the truth) condemns usury not because it is an evil, but because he is annoyed at the fact that there are men who practice it.

10

Volodia was not exactly depressed when, as night was setting in, they rode up to the big bridge that spanned the bay, but he felt heavyhearted. Everything he had seen and heard had been in such striking contrast to the impressions of the recent past: the large, light, parquet-floored examination hall, the kind voices and merry laughter of his comrades, his new uniform, his beloved Tsar whom he had been accustomed to seeing for seven years and who, bidding them farewell, had, with tears in his eyes, called them his children—and in such striking contrast to his beautiful, radiant, glorious dreams.

"Well, we've arrived!" said the older brother when they drove up to Mikhailovsky Battery and alighted from the trap. "If they allow us to cross the bridge, we'll go straight to the Nikolayevsky Barracks. You stay there till morning, and I'll go to the regiment and find out where your battery is stationed and come for you tomorrow."

"But why can't we go together?" pleaded Volodia. "I'll go

with you to the bastion. I've got to get used to it, anyhow. If you can go, so can I."

"You'd better not."

"No, please! At least I'll know how...."

"I advise you not to come. However, if you...."

The sky was dark, but clear; the stars, and the flying shells and continuous flashes of gunfire lit up the gloom; the white buildings of the battery and the fore part of the bridge loomed in the darkness. Gun shots and explosions, several in rapid succession or simultaneously, rent the air, growing louder and more distinct literally every second. Amidst this din, as if seconding it, could be heard the growling of the bay. A breeze was blowing from the sea and the air felt raw. The brothers walked to the bridge. A militiaman clumsily tilted his musket and called out:

"Who goes there?"

"A soldier!"

"My orders are to allow no one to pass!"

"What do you mean! We've got to get to the other side!"

"Get the officer's permission."

The officer, who was dozing while seated on an anchor, got up and ordered the guard to let them pass.

"You can go across, but you can't come back. Where are you all pushing to?" he shouted to the army carts stacked high with gabions that were crowding the entrance to the bridge.

Stepping on to the first pontoon, the brothers collided with some soldiers who were coming from the other side talking loudly.

"When's got his ammunition, 'e squared 'is accounts, I'll say...."

"Eh, laddies!" another voice said. "The moment you come to Severnaya you feel you're in another world, honest to God! Even the air smells different."

"Shut up!" said the first. "The other day one of those blasted shells came flying over here and blew the legs off two sailors, so you'd better not talk!"

The brothers walked the length of the first pontoon and halted on the second, which was already partly immersed in water, to wait for the cart. The wind, which had seemed so faint in the field, was strong and gusty here; the bridge rocked and the waves hurled themselves furiously against the beams, broke against the anchors and ropes and flooded the planks. To the right roared the vaguely hostile black sea, a straight and endless black line marking it off from the starry, light-grey sky; and far away glimmered the lights of the enemy fleet. To the left loomed the dark hull of one of our warships, and the waves could be heard beating against its sides; a steamer could be seen speeding rapidly and noisily away from Severnaya. The flash of a shell exploding near it lit up for an instant the tall stacks of gabions on its deck, the two men standing on top, and the white foam and spray of the greenish waves that were cleft by its stem. On the edge of the bridge sat a sailor in his shirt sleeves, his feet dangling in the water, hacking at something with an axe. Ahead, over Sevastopol, the same flashes could be seen and the awful sounds were wafted in increasing volume. A wave that swept in from the sea broke over the right side of the bridge and wet Volodia's feet; two soldiers passed by, splashing their feet in the water. Suddenly there was a crash and flash which lit up the fore part of the bridge, a cart that was riding over it, and a man on horseback, and splinters came whistling down into the water, raising fountains of spray.

"Why, it's Mikhail Semyonich!" the horseman said, drawing rein in front of the older Kozeltsov. "Have you completely recovered already?"

"As you see. Where are you off to?"

"To Severnaya for ammunition. I'm acting regimental ad-

jutant now. . . . We're expecting an assault at any moment and the men have no more than five rounds each in their pouches. Nice state of affairs, isn't it?"

"Where's Martsov?"

"He had his foot blown off yesterday . . . in town too, while sleeping in his room. . . . Perhaps you'll still find him at the dressing station."

"The regiment is at the 5th, is that right?"

"Yes, we've moved up in place of the M. . . 's. Look in at the dressing station; you'll find some of our men there, they'll take you over."

"And how about my lodgings on the Morskaya. Are they still intact?"

"Oh, brother. The place was shot to blazes long ago. You won't recognize Sevastopol now; no women, no taverns, no music. The last establishment moved out yesterday. It's awfully dull there now. Well, good-bye!"

And the officer set off at a canter.

Volodia suddenly felt frightened; he imagined that a cannon ball or splinter would come flying at him right now and hit him straight in the head. The raw air, the darkness, the sounds, and especially the growling murmur of the waves seemed to warn him not to go on further, that nothing good awaited him ahead, that his foot would nevermore tread Russian soil this side of the bay, and that he would do better to turn back and flee as far from this horrible death trap as possible. "But perhaps it is already too late, perhaps my fate is sealed," he thought, shivering partly from this thought and partly because the water had seeped through his boots and had wet his feet.

Volodia heaved a deep sigh and walked a few steps away from his brother.

"Lord! Will I be killed here? I? Lord, have mercy on me!" he muttered, crossing himself.

"Well, let us go, Volodia," said the older brother as the cart drove onto the bridge. Did you see that shell?"

On the bridge the brothers encountered carts loaded with wounded men or with gabions; one, driven by a woman, was loaded with furniture. On the other side of the bridge they were not detained.

Instinctively hugging the wall of the Nikolayevsky Battery and silently listening to the sounds of the shells now bursting overhead and to the screeching of the splinters as they rained down from above, the brothers approached the shrine at the battery where the holy image was kept. Here they learned that the Light 5th, to which Volodia had been appointed, was stationed in Korabelnaya. Notwithstanding the danger, they decided to spend the night together at the older brother's quarters at the 5th Bastion and from there proceed to the battery next day. Turning down a corridor and stepping over the legs of the soldiers who were sleeping at the foot of the battery wall, they finally came to the dressing station.

11

As they entered the first room, which was furnished with cots on which wounded soldiers were lying, and was impregnated with that oppressive and frightfully disgusting odour peculiar to hospitals, two nurses came towards them.

One of them, a woman of 50 or thereabouts, with black eyes and stern features, was carrying bandages and lint and issuing instructions to a feldsher, quite a young lad who was following on her heels; the other, a very pretty girl of about 20, with a pale, fair, delicate face which looked so sweetly forlorn under her white cap, was walking by the side of the older nurse, her hands thrust into the pockets of her apron and her eyes downcast, looking as if she were afraid of being left behind.

Kozeltsov approached and asked them whether they knew where Martsov was, the man whose foot had been torn off the day before.

"The man from the P. Regiment?" the older nurse asked. "Is he a relative of yours?"

"No, ma'am. A comrade of mine."

"Hm! Take them to him," she said to the younger nurse in French. "This way," and with this she went to the bed of a wounded soldier, accompanied by the feldsher.

"Let's go. What are you looking at?" Kozeltsov asked Volodia, who with uplifted eyebrows and an expression of pain on his face, was staring at the wounded, unable to tear his eyes away from them. "Let's go!"

Volodia followed his brother, still gazing around him and unconsciously muttering:

"Oh, God! Oh, God!"

"I suppose he has just arrived?" the nurse asked Kozeltsov, nodding towards Volodia who followed them down the corridor still sighing heavily.

"Yes, he's just arrived."

The pretty nurse glanced at Volodia and suddenly burst into tears.

"Oh, God, God! When will all this end!" she said in a tone of despair.

They entered the officers' ward. Martsov was lying on his back, his muscular arms, bare to the elbow, flung behind his head, and his sallow face bearing the expression of a man who was clenching his teeth to prevent himself from shrieking with pain. His sound leg, clad in a stocking, protruded from under the blanket and one could see the toes twitching convulsively inside it.

"Well, how do you feel?" the nurse asked, as she raised his baldish head with her slender, delicate hand—on a finger of

which Volodia noticed a gold ring—and smoothed his pillow. “Some friends of yours have come to see you.”

“It hurts, of course!” the patient snapped crossly. “Leave me alone! I’m all right.” The toes in the stocking twitched faster. “Hello! Sorry, what’s your name?” he asked, addressing himself to Kozeltsov. “Oh, yes—one’s liable to forget everything out here,” he said when the other told him his name. “We lived together, didn’t we?” he said without any sign of pleasure and looked enquiringly at Volodia.

“This is my brother. He’s just arrived from Petersburg.”

“Hm! Well! I’ve earned my *full discharge*,” he said with a grimace of pain. “Oh, how it hurts! . . . It would be better if the end came soon.”

He jerked his leg convulsively and covered his face with his hands.

“Better leave him,” said the nurse in a whisper with tears in her eyes. “He’s in a bad state.”

At Severnaya the brothers had arranged to go to the 5th Bastion together; but on leaving the Nikolayevsky Battery they decided that each should go his separate way, as if by mutual agreement not to expose themselves to unnecessary risk.

“But how will you find the place, Volodia?” the older brother asked. “Oh yes, there’s Nikolayev; he’ll see you to Korabelnaya. I’ll go along by myself, and look you up tomorrow.”

Nothing more was said between the two brothers at this, their last farewell.

The guns still roared with unabated force, but Yekaterininskaya Street, along which Volodia was proceeding silently followed by Nikolayev, was deserted and quiet. All he could discern in the gloom was the wide street lined with large, white

buildings, the walls of which were wrecked at many places, and the stone-flagged sidewalks along which he strode, encountering at rare intervals a few soldiers and officers. Keeping on the left side of the street and passing the Admiralty, he saw, in the glare of a bright light shining behind a wall, the acacias that were planted along the edge of the sidewalk, their green supports, and their wilted, dusty leaves. He distinctly heard his own footsteps and those of Nikolayev, who was walking behind him and breathing heavily. He was not thinking about anything in particular: the pretty nurse, Martsov's stockinged foot with its twitching toes, the gloom, the shells and various images of death flitted vaguely through his mind. His young, impressionable heart shrunk and ached from a feeling of loneliness and the universal indifference to his fate in this moment of danger. "I'll be killed, I'll be in pain, I'll suffer, and no one will shed a tear!" And all this instead of the heroic life of action and kind sympathy of which he had dreamed so sweetly. The shells burst and screeched ever closer and closer; Nikolayev sighed more often, but did not break the silence. As they crossed the Maly Korabelny Bridge, Volodia saw something fly past quite near him and drop into the bay, light up the purple waves with a red glare for an instant, vanish and rise again in a fountain of spray.

"It wasn't snuffed, did you see that?" said Nikolayev.

"Yes," answered Volodia, involuntarily and to his own surprise speaking in a thin, very squeaky voice.

They encountered several stretchers with wounded men and more army carts loaded with gabions; a regiment passed them on the Korabelnaya; horsemen rode past. One of the latter, an officer accompanied by a Cossack, was riding at a canter, but on catching sight of Volodia he drew rein, peered into the boy's face, turned aside, and whipping up his horse rode away. "Alone, all alone! No one cares whether I'm alive or



not," the poor boy thought in despair—and he really felt like crying.

Ascending a hill and passing a high white wall he turned down a street lined with wrecked cottages and lit up by the flashes of shells. A drunken, dishevelled woman reeled out of a wicket gate accompanied by a sailor, collided with Volodia and mumbled:

"If he were a gen'leman.... Sorry Mr. Officer, Your Honour."

The poor boy's heart ached more and more, while the flashes over the black horizon became more frequent and shells shrieked and burst around him in increasing number. Nikolayev heaved a deep sigh and suddenly began to speak in what sounded to Vodolia like a funereal voice.

"He was in such an awful hurry to leave the gubernia. We must go! We must go! And this is where we were hurrying to! Gentlemen with sense, when they get only a tiny scratch, stay

as long as they can in hospital. That's the way! What could be better?"

"But brother has recovered, what else could he do?" Volodia answered, hoping to drive away the feeling that was oppressing him by talking.

"Recovered! How can you say he's recovered when he's really ill? Some who are really well, and have got sense, live in hospital at a time like this. What fun is there in being here? You can get an arm or a leg torn off—and that's all! And you don't have to wait long for either! It's bad enough here in the city; what must it be like on the bastions? You can't help saying your prayers all the time. . . . The devil! Zipped right by!" he added, listening to the sound of a shell splinter that whizzed past. "Now, here I've been told to take Your Honour up," he continued. "Of course, we know our business: do as we're told, but the chief thing is, we left the trap with some soldier and the bundle's untied! Go, he says, go! But if anything's lost, Nikolayev'll be to blame!"

A few more steps brought them to a square. Nikolayev sighed and lapsed into silence.

"There's your artillery, Your Honour!" he said suddenly. "Ask the sentry, he'll show you where to go." And Volodia, walking off a few paces, no longer heard Nikolayev's sighs.

He suddenly felt absolutely and utterly alone. The sense of his loneliness and danger—on the threshold of death, as it seemed to him—lay on his heart like a cold and frightfully heavy stone. He stopped in the middle of the square, glanced round to see if anyone was looking, seized his head in his hands and muttered in horror: "Oh, Lord! Am I really a coward? A low, beastly, despicable coward? Can't I die honourably for my country, for the Tsar, for whom, only recently, I had dreamed of dying with such rapture? No! I am a miserable, unhappy creature!" And overcome by a genuine feeling of despair and

disillusionment with himself, he asked the sentry to direct him to the quarters of the battery commander and proceeded there forthwith.

13

The quarters of the battery commander, which the sentry had pointed out to him, was a small two-storey house with the entrance in the yard. The faint light of a candle glimmered through the paper that had been pasted over one of the windows. An orderly was sitting on the porch and smoking a pipe. He went in to announce Volodia and then came back and led him to a room. In the room, between two windows, under a broken mirror, stood a writing desk littered with official papers, several chairs and an iron bed with clean bedding, and a small rug on the floor by the bedside.

At the door stood a handsome man with a bushy moustache—a sergeant-major, in a greatcoat, a sheathed bayonet at his side, wearing the St. George's Cross and the Hungarian medal. Pacing up and down the middle of the room was a short Staff officer, about forty years of age, in a thin, worn coat, and with a swollen cheek, tied up with a handkerchief.

"Ensign Kozeltsov Junior, assigned to the 5th Light Artillery, reporting for duty!" rapped out Volodia in the regulation manner.

The battery commander drily replied to the boy's greeting and, without offering to shake hands, he invited him to sit down.

Volodia seated himself timidly on a chair near the desk and began to toy with a pair of scissors that he absent-mindedly picked up; the battery commander, with his hands clasped behind his back, his head lowered, and casting an occasional glance at the hands that were twirling the scissors, continued to pace up and down the room with the air of a person trying to recollect something.

The battery commander was rather short, had a large bald patch at the top of his head, a thick moustache which grew over and concealed his mouth, and large, pleasant hazel eyes; his hands were well-shaped, clean and plump; with his short, out-turned legs he walked with a confident step and a slight swagger, which showed that he was not one of the bashful sort.

"Yes," he said, halting in front of the sergeant-major. "We had better add a little to the battery horses' feed, beginning with tomorrow; they're getting pretty thin. What do you think?"

"We could add a little, Your Honour, why not? Oats are cheaper now," the sergeant-major replied, wriggling his fingers as he kept his hands at his sides, as if restraining an habitual desire to help conversation with gestures. "Yesterday, Your Honour, our forager, Franschuk, sent me a note from the baggage train saying that we ought to buy some axles there. They're cheap, he says. What's your orders?"

"Well, let him buy some, he has the money," said the battery commander, resuming his promenade up and down the room. . . . "Where are your things?" he suddenly asked Volodia, halting in front of him.

Poor Volodia was so worried by the thought that he was a coward, that he saw contempt in every glance and every word that was directed towards him. It seemed to him that the battery commander had already divined his secret and was now jeering at him. Blushing with confusion, he replied that his things were at Grafskaya and that his brother had promised to bring them round the next day.

But the lieutenant-colonel was not listening to him. Turning to the sergeant-major, he inquired:

"Where shall we put the ensign?"

"The ensign, sir?" repeated the sergeant-major, throwing Volodia into still greater confusion by the fleeting glance he

threw at him, which seemed to say: "What ensign? And is it worth while putting him anywhere?"

"We can put him downstairs, Your Honour, in the lieutenant-captain's room," he continued after a pause. "The lieutenant-captain is out on the bastion, so his bed is vacant."

"Well, will that do for the time being?" asked the battery commander. "You must be tired. We'll fix you up better tomorrow."

Volodia rose and bowed.

"Would you like some tea?" asked the battery commander, when Volodia was already at the door. "We can have the samovar made."

Volodia bowed and went out. The colonel's orderly took him downstairs and led him into a very bare and dirty room littered with all sorts of odds and ends. In it stood an iron bed without sheets or blanket. A man in a pink shirt was sleeping on the bed, covered by a heavy army coat.

Volodia took him for a private.

"Pyotr Nikolaich!" said the orderly, shaking the man by the shoulder. "The ensign is to sleep here. . . . This is our cadet," he added, turning to the ensign.

"Oh, don't bother, please!" Volodia said; but the cadet, a tall, heavily-built young man with a handsome but extremely stupid face, got up from the bed, flung on his coat, and left the room, evidently still half asleep.

"It's all right, I'll lie down in the yard," he muttered.

Left alone with his thoughts, the first thing Volodia felt was disgust with his own state of confusion and depression. He wanted to fall asleep and forget everything, chiefly himself. He blew out the candle, took off his coat, lay down on the bed,

and covering himself with his coat, he drew it over his head to keep out the fear of darkness he had suffered from ever since childhood. But suddenly the thought occurred to him that a shell might come flying over, pierce the roof, and kill him. He rose and strained his ears; he heard the footsteps of the battery commander right over his head.

"If a shell does come flying over," he thought, "it will first kill those upstairs, and then me; at least I won't be the only one killed." This thought calmed him a little and he began to doze off. . . . "But what if Sevastopol is captured tonight and the French come tearing in? What will I defend myself with?" He again got out of bed and began to pace the room. The fear of imminent danger had overcome the mysterious fear of darkness. Except for a saddle and a samovar, there was nothing solid in the room. "I'm a cad, I'm a coward, a beastly coward!" he suddenly thought, and again he was overcome by the feeling of contempt, even loathing, for himself. He lay down again and tried not to think, but the sounds of the bombardment, which set the panes in the only window rattling, involuntarily recalled the impressions of the day and again reminded him of danger; he had visions of wounded men and blood, of shells and splinters flying into the room, of the pretty nurse crying over him—a dying man—as she dressed his wounds; of his mother bidding him farewell in the little country town, praying fervently with tears in her eyes before a miracle-working icon, and again he felt that sleep was impossible. But suddenly the thought of God, almighty and kind, who could do everything and heard every prayer, flashed through his mind. He went down on his knees, crossed himself and put his hands together as he had been taught to do in childhood. This gesture immediately restored his long-forgotten composure.

"If I must die, if my life is needed, do it, O Lord, do it quickly," he prayed. "But if courage and firmness are needed.

which I lack, grant them to me, but deliver me from shame and ignominy, which I cannot bear; teach me what to do to obey Thy will."

The childish, frightened, narrow soul suddenly grew to manhood and became enlightened; a new, wide and bright horizon opened before it. Many more thoughts and emotions flashed through his mind and heart in the short space of time that this feeling held him; but soon, to the sounds of the continuing crashes, the roar of the bombardment and the rattling of the windowpanes, he dropped into a deep and untroubled sleep.

Great Lord! Thou alone hast heard and knowest the simple but fervent and despairing prayers of ignorance, vague repentance and suffering which have been rising to Thee from this awful place of death—from the general who only a moment before had been thinking of breakfast and a St. George's Cross, but gripped by fear, had felt Thy presence, to the exhausted, hungry, vermin-ridden soldier who is lying prostrate on the bare floor of the Nikolayevsky Battery and beseeching Thee quickly to grant him the reward he unconsciously anticipates for all his unmerited sufferings! Yes, Thou dost not tire of hearing the prayers of Thy children, and Thou sendest them everywhere a ministering angel to instil into their hearts patience, a sense of duty, and the consolation of hope.

15

Meeting a soldier from his regiment, Kozeltsov Senior went with him straight to the 5th Bastion.

"Keep to the wall, Your Honour," the soldier said.

"Why?"

"It's dangerous, Your Honour. Look at that one coming over," said the private, listening to the sound of a cannon ball that came shrieking past and dropped into the dry road on the other side of the street.

Paying no heed to the soldier, Kozeltsov strode boldly down the middle of the street.

These were the same streets, the same, perhaps more frequent, flashes, sounds, groans, meeting with wounded men, the same batteries, breastworks and trenches as there had been in the spring when he had been in Sevastopol; but now it all seemed sadder and at the same time more vigorous—the buildings were damaged more and there were no lights in the windows, except for Kushchin's house (a hospital); not a single woman did he meet; the former air of habit and unconcern had given way to one of tense expectation, weariness and strain.

At last they reached the last trench and heard the voice of a private of the P. Regiment who recognized his former company commander; the 3rd Battalion was lined up in the darkness hugging a wall, which every now and again was lit up by flashes of gunfire; he could hear the subdued conversation and the clank of muskets.

"Where's the regimental commander?" Kozeltsov inquired.

"In the naval blindage, Your Honour! I'll take you there if you like," replied an obliging private.

The soldier led Kozeltsov from trench to trench until they came to a ditch in which a sailor was sitting, smoking a pipe. Behind him loomed a door through the chinks of which a light gleamed.

"May I go in?"

"Just a moment, sir, I'll announce you," said the sailor, passing through the door.

On the other side of the door two voices were heard in conversation.

"If Prussia remains neutral," one of them was saying, "Austria will too...."

"What's Austria," the other voice replied, "when the Slavonic lands.... Well, ask him in."

Kozeltsov had never been in this blindage before. He was amazed at its ostentatious elegance. The floor was parqueted, the door was protected by a screen. There were two bedsteads, one against each wall, and in a corner hung a large gold-framed icon of the Holy Virgin with a pink glass oil lamp burning in front of it. On one of the beds a naval officer was sleeping fully clothed, while on the other, at a table, on which two opened bottles of wine were standing, sat the two who had been conversing—the new regimental commander and his aide. Although Kozeltsov was no coward and was completely innocent of all crime either against the government or against the regimental commander, he funked and began to quake at the sight of the colonel—who only recently had been his comrade—so haughtily did the colonel rise and hear him report for duty. And the aide too, sitting there, embarrassed him by his pose and look, which seemed to say: “I am only a friend of your regimental commander. You have not come to me, and so I neither expect nor demand deference from you.” “Strange,” thought Kozeltsov, gazing at his commander, “he took command over the regiment only seven weeks ago, and yet everything about him, his clothes, his bearing and his glance, bespeak the power of a regimental commander, power based not so much on age, seniority in the service, or military merit, as on wealth. Is it so long ago,” he thought, “that this same Batrishchev caroused with us, wore a dark cotton shirt for weeks on end and gorged himself with those eternal chops and dumplings without inviting anyone to share them? And now! A Holland shirt peeps out of his wide-sleeved cloth jacket, a 10-ruble cigar between his fingers and a 6-ruble bottle of Lafitte on the table—and purchased at incredible prices through the quartermaster in Simferopol—and in his eyes that expression of cold hauteur of the wealthy aristocrat which seems to say: ‘I may be your comrade, since I’m a regimental commander of the new school, but don’t forget that you’ve got

sixty rubles, a third of your pay, whereas tens of thousands pass through my hands. Believe me, I know you'd give half your life to be in my place."

"You have been a long time recuperating," the colonel said to Kozeltsov, staring coldly at him.

"I've been ill, Colonel, and even now my wound has not quite healed."

"Then you shouldn't have come," said the colonel, looking distrustfully at the stocky figure of the officer. "Will you be able to cope with your duties?"

"Why, of course, sir."

"Well, I'm very glad to hear it, sir. In that case, please take over from Ensign Zaitsev the 9th Company—the one you were in command of before. You'll receive the order at once."

"Very good, sir."

"And when you go, please send the regimental adjutant to me," said the regimental commander, indicating by a slight nod that the audience was over.

On leaving the blindage, Kozeltsov mumbled something to himself several times and hunched up his shoulders as if something were causing him pain, discomfort or vexation; but he was vexed not with the regimental commander (he had no reason to be) but with himself, and he seemed to be dissatisfied with everything around him. Like all relations established by law, discipline and its concomitant obedience are agreeable only when—apart from mutual recognition that they are essential—the subordinate admits that those above him are superior to him in experience, military merit or simply moral qualities; but as soon as discipline is based, as is often the case with us, on fortuity, or the money principle, it is always transformed either into superciliousness or into concealed envy and chagrin, and instead of the beneficial effect of uniting the mass into a single whole, we get the very opposite. A man who does not feel he can com-

mand respect by dint of his own intrinsic merits instinctively dreads intimacy with his subordinates and tries to avert criticism by assuming an air of importance. And the subordinates, seeing only this external, offensive side, are inclined, in most cases unjustly, to expect nothing good of it.

16

Before joining his fellow officers, Kozeltsov went off to greet his company and see where it was stationed. The breast-works built of gabions, the lines of trenches, the cannon which he passed on his way and even the splinters and shells over which he stumbled—all continually lit up by flashes of gunfire, were quite familiar to him. It had all been burned into his memory three months ago, when he spent two weeks without a break in this very bastion. And although there was much that was frightful in these recollections, they, nevertheless, brought back the charm of days gone by, and he recognized the familiar places and objects with pleasure, as though he had really enjoyed the two weeks he had spent here. The company was deployed along the defence wall of the 6th Bastion.

Kozeltsov entered a long blindage, completely open on the entrance side, in which, he was told, the 9th Company was quartered. The place was so crowded that there was literally no room to wedge a foot in. On one side flickered a crooked tallow candle, held by a soldier lying on the floor. Another soldier was reading a book, syllable by syllable, holding it close to the candle. In the foul-smelling semi-gloom of the blindage raised heads were discerned eagerly listening to the reader. The book was a primer, and as he entered the blindage, Kozeltsov heard the following:

"Fear... of... death... is a feel-ing... in-nate in man."

"Trim the candle," a voice called out, "It's a fine book."

"My . . . God. . . ." the reader continued.

When Kozeltsov asked for the sergeant-major the reader stopped and the soldiers began to fidget, cough and blow their noses as people do after a period of tense silence. The sergeant-major, buttoning his coat, rose from the group that surrounded the reader, and stepping over the legs of some, and on the legs of those who had no room to shift them, approached the officer.

"How do, brother! Is this all our company?"

"Wish you well, and welcome, Your Honour!" replied the sergeant-major, glancing affably and merrily at Kozeltsov. "Are you better, Your Honour? Well, thank God for that. We've been missing you."

It was evident that Kozeltsov was liked in the company.

Voices were heard in the depths of the blindage: "Our old commander's back; the one who was wounded; Kozeltsov, Mikhail Semyonich," etc. Some even stepped up to him, and the drummer ventured to welcome him.

"Hello, Obanchuk!" said Kozeltsov. "Still alive and kicking? Hello there, lads!" he then said, raising his voice.

"Wish you well!" the blindage roared back.

"How are you, lads?"

"Bad, Your Honour. The French are wearing us down. They keep lamming at us from behind their trenches,—but they daren't come out in the open."

"Well, perhaps I've brought you luck and God will grant that they come out in the open, lads!" said Kozeltsov. "It won't be the first time we've tackled them. We'll give them a bit of cold steel again."

"Glad to do our best, Your Honour!" said several voices.

"He's a brave man, is His Honour, a very brave man," said the drummer in a low voice, but loud enough to be heard, turning to another soldier, as if to confirm what the company

commander had said and to convince the soldier that there was nothing boastful or improbable about it.

Leaving the soldiers, Kozeltsov went to the defence barracks, where his fellow officers were quartered.

17

The large barrack room was crowded with officers of all arms: naval, artillery and infantry. Some were sleeping, others were sitting on boxes and on the carriage of a fortress gun and talking, while still others, the largest and noisiest group beyond the vault, were sitting on two *burkas* spread on the floor, drinking porter and playing cards.

"Oh! Here's Kozeltsov! Kozeltsov! Glad you're back! Good lad! ... How's the wound?" came from all sides. It was plain that here, too, he was liked and that they were glad he had returned.

After shaking hands with his acquaintances, Kozeltsov joined the noisy group of officers who were playing cards, most of whom were his comrades. A handsome, lean brunet with a long thin nose and a bushy moustache and side whiskers was dealing out the cards with his fine, white fingers, on one of which he wore a large gold insignia ring. He dealt the cards quickly and carelessly, evidently worried about something, but trying to appear as if he didn't care. Near him, on his right, a grey-haired major was reclining on his elbow, having already imbibed a good deal of liquor, and with affected coolness was punting at half a ruble a time and paying out at once. On the left, a red-headed officer with a perspiring face was squatting on his haunches, laughing and joking in a forced manner whenever his card was beaten. He kept fumbling in the empty pocket of his pantaloons with one of his hands, played for high stakes, but, evidently, not for cash, which was just what was worrying

the handsome dark man. A lean, bald-headed pale-faced, clean-shaven officer, with a large, cruel mouth, paced up and down the room with a big sheaf of assignats in his hands and every now and again played *va banque* and always won.

Kozeltsov took a drink of vodka and sat down by the players.

"Take a hand, Mikhail Semyonich?" the banker invited him. "You must have brought piles of money with you, eh?"

"Where could I have got any money? On the contrary, I spent my last ruble in town."

"How can that be? Surely you must have cleaned somebody out in Simferopol?"

"Not much, I assure you," answered Kozeltsov, but, evidently wishing not to be believed, he unbuttoned his coat and picked up the soiled cards.

"Perhaps I will have a try. You never know what tricks the Devil is up to! Even a mosquito can do some funny things, you know! I'd better have a drink to get my pluck up, though."

And very soon, after three glasses of vodka and several more of porter he felt in complete harmony with the spirit of the company, *i.e.*, dazed and oblivious to everything, about to lose his last three rubles.

The little perspiring officer had 150 rubles against his account.

"No luck," he said, nonchalantly putting his hand out for another card.

"See that you send it," the banker said, pausing in dealing the cards to look hard at the perspiring officer.

"Allow me to send it tomorrow," replied the officer, rising and fumbling nervously in his empty pocket.

"Hm!" grumbled the banker, angrily dealing the cards to the right and left. "No! This won't do!" he added laying down

the cards. "I'm going on strike! It's not fair, Zakhar Ivanovich. We were playing for cash, not on the book."

"What! Have you any doubts about my paying? That's strange!"

"Where do I get my money?" muttered the major, who was quite drunk by this time, and had won about eight rubles. I dropped over twenty rubles, but when I win I get nothing!"

"How can I pay when there's no money on the board?" protested the banker.

"That's nothing to do with me!" shouted the major, rising from the floor. "I'm playing with you, with honest men, not with him."

The perspiring officer suddenly flared up.

"I said I'll pay tomorrow. How dare you talk to me in that insolent manner?"

"I'll talk as I please! Honest men don't do that sort of things, that's what I say!" shouted the major.

"That's enough, Fyodor Fyodorovich!" everybody cried, restraining the major. "Let it drop!"

It looked, however, as if the major had only been waiting for everybody to ask him to calm down in order to cast all restraint to the winds. He suddenly jumped up and staggered towards the perspiring officer.

"Insolent, am I? Who is the senior here? You or I? I've served my Tsar for twenty years! Insolent? You whippersnapper!" he suddenly squealed, getting more and more excited at the sound of his own voice. "Cad!"

But let us draw the curtain over this very depressing scene. Tomorrow, or perhaps even tonight, every one of these men will be marching to death gaily and proudly; and will die resolutely and calmly; there is but one consolation in life under these inhuman and hopeless conditions which horrify the coolest

imaginings, and that consolation is oblivion, obliteration of consciousness. In the depths of every man's soul lies the noble spark which will make him a hero; but this spark cannot shine brightly all the time—at the psychological moment it will flare up into a flame and shed light on glorious deeds.

18

Next day the bombardment continued with its previous intensity. At about eleven o'clock in the morning, Volodia Kozeltsov was sitting among a group of battery officers, and, having grown somewhat accustomed to them, was studying the new faces, observing, making inquiries and recounting his own experiences. He liked the unaffected conversation of the artillery officers, which was inclined to be a little scientific, and it commanded his respect. On the other hand, the officers took a liking to the shy, innocent and handsome ensign. The senior officer of the battery, a short, red-haired captain with a small tuft and smooth side whiskers, who had been trained in the old traditions of the artillery, was a ladies' man, and had a reputation for scholarship, tested Volodia's knowledge of artillery and the latest inventions, teased him about his youthfulness and pretty face, and in general treated him like a father, which pleased Volodia very much. Sub-lieutenant Dyadenko, a young officer in a tattered coat and with ruffled hair, who pronounced his "o's" long and spoke with an Ukrainian accent, talked loudly and continuously, looked for every opportunity to start a cavilling argument, and gesticulated wildly; nevertheless Volodia liked him, for he could not help discerning the man's honesty and extreme kindheartedness beneath his rough exterior. Dyadenko kept offering Volodia his services, and all the time tried to prove to him that all the guns in Sevastopol were posted contrary to regulations. The only man in the group Volodia did not like

was Lieutenant Chernovitsky, with his raised eyebrows, wearing a coat which, though not new, was clean and neatly patched, and a gold chain strung across his satin vest, although he was more polite to him than all the others. He kept asking what His Majesty and the War Minister were doing, and told him with affected fervour about the feats of valour that were being displayed in Sevastopol, deploring the little patriotism that one met with, the unwise orders that were issued, etc., and, in general, displayed considerable learning, knowledge, intellect and noble sentiments, but for some reason it all seemed to Volodia as being affected and unnatural. Above all he observed that the other officers scarcely spoke to Chernovitsky. Cadet Vlang, whom he had dislodged from his bed the night before, was also here. He did not join in the conversation, but sat modestly in a corner, laughed whenever anything funny was said, jogged the memory when anything had been forgotten, ordered vodka, and rolled cigarettes for all the officers. Whether it was Volodia's modesty and courtesy, the fact that he treated him as an officer and did not bully him as if he were a mere boy, or his good looks which had charmed *Vlanga*, as his men called him, for some reason declining his name in the feminine gender, the fact is that he could not tear his large, gentle, bovine eyes away from the new officer's face, foreseeing and anticipating all his wishes, and all the time seeming to be in an ecstasy of love, which, of course, the officers noticed and chaffed him about.

Just before lunch hour the lieutenant-captain at the bastion was relieved and joined the company. Lieutenant-Captain Kraut was a fair-haired, handsome and vivacious officer, with a large, red moustache and side whiskers; he spoke perfect Russian, but too correctly and rhetorically for a Russian. In the service and in ordinary life he was as perfect as in his Russian; he performed his duties excellently, was a good comrade and a

most trustworthy man in money matters; but precisely because everything about him was so perfect, there was something lacking in him as a plain man. Like all Russian Germans, in strange contrast to the ideal German Germans, he was practical to a degree.

"Here's our hero!" exclaimed the captain, when Kraut entered the room, swinging his arms and clanking his spurs. "What will you have, Friedrich Krestianich, tea or vodka?"

"I have already ordered tea," he replied, "but meanwhile, a drop of vodka won't hurt, to cheer you up. Very pleased to meet you. I hope we'll be friends," he said to Volodia as the latter rose and bowed to him. "Lieutenant-Captain Kraut. The sergeant-major at the bastion told me that you arrived yesterday."

"Yes, and I'd like to thank you for the use of your bed: I slept in it last night."

"I hope you were comfortable. One of its legs is broken, but there's no one to attend to it—state of siege, you know—it has to be propped up."

"Well, did you have a good night's duty?" asked Dyadenko.

"Not so bad, only Skvortsov was hurt, and a gun carriage that was *repaired* yesterday, was smashed to smithereens!"

He rose and paced up and down the room; he was obviously in the pleasant mood of a man who has safely emerged from danger.

"Well, Dmitri Gavrilovich," he said, shaking the captain's knee, "how are you, brother? Still no news about your recommendation?"

"No, nothing yet."

"And there won't be," Dyadenko interjected. "I said there wouldn't."

"Why not?"

"Because the dispatch was not worded properly."

"Oh, you caviller!" said Kraut with a merry smile. "You're a real, stubborn Ukrainian. To spite you, you'll get a Lieutenantcy".

"No, I won't."

"Oh, Vlang! Bring me my pipe and fill it," he called to the cadet, who eagerly got up to obey.

Kraut livened the company up with his account of the bombardment and with his questions about what had happened in his absence, and he had a word to say for everybody.

19

"Well, how have you fixed up here?" Kraut asked Volodia. "Pardon me, but what is your name and patronymic? It's the custom here, you know. Did you get yourself a horse?"

"No," said Volodia, "and I don't know what to do. I told the captain that I have no horse and will have no money until I get my travel and fodder allowance. I'd like to ask the battery commander to lend me a horse for the time being, but I'm afraid he'll refuse."

"Who, Apollon Sergeich?"—he made a sound with his lips expressing doubt and looked enquiringly at the captain. "I doubt it!"

"Even if he does refuse, it won't matter," said the captain. "You don't really need a horse here, but there's no harm in trying. I'll ask him today."

"What? You don't know him," interjected Dyadenko. "He might refuse anything else, but not this. . . . D'you want to bet? . . ."

"Oh, of course, you always want to argue!"

"I argue about what I know! He's stingy about other things, but he'll lend a horse because it'll pay him."

"What do you mean it'll pay him when he has to pay eight rubles for oats?" said Kraut. "It'll pay him not to keep an extra horse!"

"Ask him to give you Skvorets, Vladimir Semyonich!" Vlang said to Volodia on returning with Kraut's pipe. "That's a fine horse."

"The one you tumbled into the ditch with at Soroki, eh, Vlanga?" the lieutenant-captain said with a chuckle.

"Why do you say oats cost eight rubles when he has receipts at ten and a half," Dyadenko persisted. "Of course, it'll pay him!"

"And why shouldn't he have something over? Wouldn't you let a man have a horse to go into town on if you were a battery commander?"

"When I am a battery commander, my dear man, my horses will get four oat-bags apiece; I won't make anything, don't worry."

"Wait and see," said the lieutenant-captain. "You'll make a bit. and when he's a battery commander he'll pocket the balance too," he added, pointing to Volodia.

"But why, Friedrich Krestianovich, do you think that he will want to make money?" Chernovitsky interjected. "Perhaps he is rich; in that case why should he want to make money?"

"Oh no, sir, I. . . . Pardon me, Captain," Volodia said, blushing to the roots of his hair. "I think it's dishonest."

"Oh the innocent lamb!" said Kraut. "Wait until you are a captain. You won't talk like that then."

"It makes no difference. All I know is that if the money is not mine I have no right to take it."

"I'll tell you this, young man," the lieutenant-captain began in a graver tone. "When you are in command of a battery, if you manage things well, you always have a balance of five hundred rubles in peacetime—in wartime it amounts to no less

than seven or eight thousand—and this on horses alone. All right. The battery commander has nothing to do with the soldiers' victuals; that's the way it's been in the artillery from time immemorial; if you're a bad manager you'll have no balance left. Now: you've got to pay out of your own pocket so much for shoeing—that's one (he bent a finger), and for medical supplies—two (he bent another finger), and for stationery—three; your broken-in horses cost 500 apiece, brother, but the remount price is fifty, and you have to get them—that's four. You have to change your men's collars—also out of your own pocket—you'll pay more than you expected for coal, and there's the officer's mess. Being a battery commander, you'll have to live in proper style: you'll need a trap, a fur coat, and this and that and a dozen other things.... What's the use of talking!"

"And the chief thing is this, Vladimir Semyonich," said the captain who had remained silent all this time. "Take a man like myself, for example, who's been in the service for twenty years on two hundred rubles pay and hard up all the time. Hasn't he a right for his services to put a bit aside for a crust of bread in his old age when contractors make tens of thousands a week?"

"What's the use of arguing," said the lieutenant-captain, intervening again. "Don't be too quick to judge. Wait until you've seen a bit of service."

Volodia felt terribly ashamed and embarrassed for having spoken so thoughtlessly, and mumbling something, he listened in silence to Dyadenko heatedly arguing to prove the contrary.

The argument was interrupted by the appearance of the colonel's orderly, who announced that lunch was served.

"Tell Apollon Sergeich to put a bottle of wine on today," Chernovitsky, buttoning his coat, said to the captain. "What's he hoarding it for? If we are killed, nobody will have it!"

"Tell him yourself," retorted the captain.

"No, you're the senior officer: we must abide by the rules in all things."

20

The table had been pushed away from the wall and covered with a soiled tablecloth, in the very same room in which Volodia had been received by the colonel the day before. The battery commander now shook hands with him and questioned him about Petersburg and the journey he had had.

"Well, gentlemen, those of you who drink vodka—help yourselves, please. Ensigns don't drink," he added, smiling at Volodia.

The battery commander was not at all as curt and dry as he had been the day before; on the contrary, he behaved like a kind and hospitable host and senior comrade. Nevertheless, all the officers, from the elderly captain to the controversialist Dyadenko, showed by the deferent way they spoke and looked at the commander, and kept to the wall as they walked up timidly, one by one, for their vodka, that they stood in awe of him.

Lunch consisted of a large bowl of cabbage soup, in which chunks of fat beef and a large quantity of pepper and laurel leaves floated, Polish *zrazi* with mustard, and *kolduni* in rather rancid butter. There were no napkins, the spoons were made of tin or wood, there were only two glasses, and the only bottle on the table was a decanter of grey glass with a chipped neck filled with water; but the dinner was by no means a dull affair, the conversation did not flag for a moment. First they discussed the battle of Inkerman, in which the battery had taken part, and each one recounted his impressions and gave his opinion as to the reasons for its failure, until the battery commander began to speak; after that the conversation naturally



passed on to the smallness of the calibre of the light artillery, and to the new guns of lighter weight, which gave Volodia an opportunity to show off his knowledge of artillery. But nobody talked about the really appalling state of affairs in Sevastopol, as though each had thought too much about this subject to want to speak about it. Nor did anybody, to Volodia's surprise and disappointment, say anything about the duties he was to perform; and one would have thought that he had come all the way to Sevastopol solely for the purpose of talking about light guns and taking luncheon with the battery commander. During the meal a shell dropped near the house. The floor and walls trembled as if from an earthquake; and a cloud of powder smoke rose in front of the window.

"I don't suppose you see anything like this in St. Petersburg; but we often get surprises like this here," said the battery commander. "Vlang! See where it burst!"

Vlang went to look and reported that it had burst in the square, and no more was said about the shell.

Just before lunch was over an old man—the battery clerk—entered the room carrying three sealed envelopes, which he handed to the battery commander. “This one is *very urgent*; a Cossack brought it from the Chief of the Artillery.” All the officers watched with eager expectancy while the battery commander, with a deftness that comes from long practice, broke the seal and drew out the *very urgent* document. “What can it be?” every one asked himself. It might be an order to withdraw from Sevastopol for rest, or an order appointing the entire battery to the bastions.

“Again!” said the battery commander, flinging the paper on the table.

“What is it, Apollon Sergeich?” asked the senior officer.

“They’re demanding an officer and crew for some mortar battery. I have only four officers all told, and not a single complete crew, and here they’re demanding more men,” the battery commander grumbled. “However, somebody will have to go, gentlemen,” he said, after a moment’s pause. “The orders are to be at Rogatka at seven o’clock.... Call the sergeant-major! Who’s to go, gentlemen, decide,” he said.

“What about him? He hasn’t been anywhere yet,” said Chernovitsky, pointing to Volodia.

The battery commander made no comment.

“Yes, I should like to go,” said Volodia, feeling cold perspiration breaking out on his back and neck.

“No, no, why should you!” the captain interjected. “No one will refuse, of course, but no one need beg to go; since Apollon Sergeich is leaving it to us, let’s cast lots as we did the last time.”

Everybody agreed: Kraut cut up some paper into small squares, rolled them up and put them into his cap. The captain cracked jokes and even dared to take this opportunity to ask the colonel to stand a drink “to buck us up,” as he put it. Dyadenko

sat looking dejected; Volodia was gazing in front of him and smiling at something; Chernovitsky kept asserting that the lot would fall to him; Kraut remained absolutely calm.

Volodia was invited to draw first. He picked the longest scroll, but at once changed his mind and drew out a shorter and thicker one; he unrolled it and read the word: "Go."

"I have to go," he said with a sigh.

"Well, God be with you. This will be your baptism of fire," said the battery commander, looking at the flushed face of the ensign with a kindly smile. "Get ready at once. And to keep you company Vlang will go with you as chief-gunner."

21

Vlang, very pleased with his assignment, ran off to get ready, went, already dressed, to help Volodia, and urged him to take his bed, his fur coat, some old copies of *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, the spirit coffee pot, and a host of other superfluous articles. The captain advised Volodia to look up the *Manual** for mortar firing and to copy out the table of angles of elevation. Volodia immediately set to work and to his surprise and joy noticed that although his fear of danger and his greater fear of being a coward had not yet left him, those feelings were not as strong as they had been the day before. This was due partly to the impressions of the day and to his activity, and partly, and chiefly, to the fact that fear, like every powerful emotion, cannot continue at the same degree of intensity for any length of time. In short, he had already outgrown his fears. At about seven in the evening, just as the sun was hiding behind the Nikolayevsky Barracks, the sergeant-major entered

* *Artillery Officers' Manual* published by Bezak (Author's Note).

and announced that the men were ready and were waiting for him.

"I gave Vlanga the list. Ask him for it, Your Honour!" he said.

About twenty artillerymen with sheathed short swords at their sides but without accoutrements were standing at the corner of the house. Volodia and the cadet stepped up to them. "Shall I make them a short speech, just say: 'How do, lads!' or say nothing at all?" he asked himself. "Why not say, 'How do, lads!' I ought to, in fact." And he boldly cried out in his musical voice: "How do, lads!" The soldiers cheerfully responded; the young, fresh voice rang pleasantly in their ears. Volodia marched bravely in front of the men, and although his heart beat as though he had been running several versts at top speed, his step was light and free and his face cheerful and bright. As they approached Malakhov Kurgan and ascended the hill, he noticed that Vlang, who hitherto had kept at his side all the way and at home had appeared so brave, was now constantly darting to the side and ducking his head, as though all the shells and cannon balls, which were whizzing by here very frequently, were flying straight at him. Some of the men were doing the same, and most of the faces expressed, if not fear, then anxiety. This spectacle completely calmed Volodia and raised his spirits.

"And so, here I am, on Malakhov Kurgan, which I had quite unnecessarily imagined was so frightful! I can walk along without bowing to the cannon balls, and am showing less fear than the others! So I am not a coward," he thought with pleasure and even a little smugness.

This smug feeling of fearlessness was soon shaken, however, by the sight that met his eyes at dusk at the Kornilov Battery, while he was looking for the commander of the bastion. Four sailors were standing near the breastwork, holding by the legs

and arms a gory corpse, stripped of its coat and boots, and swinging it in order to pitch it over the breastwork. (On the second day of the bombardment they had no time to take the dead from the bastion and so were throwing the bodies into the ditch to clear them out of the way.) Volodia stood aghast as he saw the corpse hit the top of the breastwork and then slowly roll down into the ditch; luckily the commander of the bastion turned up just then, issued instructions, and gave him a guide to lead him to the battery and the blindage for the gun crews. I will not recount here how many more horrors, dangers and disillusionments our hero lived through that evening; how, instead of the firing he had witnessed in Volkov Field, which had been conducted with all the precision and smartness that he had expected to find here, he found two small, shattered mortars without sights, one of which had been hit in the muzzle by a cannon ball, while the other stood on the wreckage of its shattered mounting; how he was unable to get men to repair the mounting until next morning; how none of the shells were of the weight indicated in the *Manual*; how two of his men were wounded, and how he had been a hair's breadth from death at least twenty times. Luckily, he was given as an assistant a naval gunner, of enormous stature, who had been handling mortars since the beginning of the siege, who insisted that the damaged mortars could still be operated, and who at night with a lantern to light the way had taken him all over the bastion as if he were showing him over his vegetable garden, and promised to have everything shipshape by morning. The blindage to which his guide led him was an oblong pit dug in the rocky soil of fourteen cubic feet dimensions, with a covering of oak logs twenty-eight inches thick. Here he took up his quarters with all his men. As soon as Vlang spotted the low twenty-eight inch door of the blindage he dived headlong through it before anyone else, tripping and almost cracking his

skull on the rocky floor, scurried into a corner and remained there. Volodia, however, waited until all the men had fixed themselves up on the floor along the walls and some had lit their pipes and then unfolded his bed in a corner, lit a candle, and, lighting a cigarette, lay down to rest. He could hear the continuous sound of gunfire overhead, not very loud, except for one gun which was mounted close by and caused the blindage to tremble so violently that the earth dribbled from the ceiling. In the blindage silence reigned, except for the men, still shy of the new officer, talking to each other at rare intervals, asking a neighbour to make more room, or for a light for a pipe, or a rat scratching among the rocks, or Vlang, who had not yet recovered his composure and was staring wildly around him, heaving loud sighs. Lying on his bed in a crowded corner lit up by a single candle, Volodia became conscious of that cozy feeling he used to have when, as a child, he had played hide and seek and had hidden in a cupboard, or under his mother's skirt, and there had listened with hated breath, afraid of the dark and yet enjoying the fun. He felt both a little afraid and merry.

22

About ten minutes later, the men grew a little bolder and began to chatter among themselves. The more important of them—two gunners: one a grey-haired veteran wearing all the medals and crosses except the St. George's Cross, and the other, a young soldier from the cantonments smoking hand-rolled cigarettes—lay nearest to the light and to the officer's bed. The drummer, as always, assumed the duty of officer's orderly. The bombardiers and drivers lay a little nearer, while in the dark-near the door, lay the *humble ones*. It was the latter who began the conversation, the occasion being the noise made by a man, bursting into the blindage.

"Don't you like being outdoors, brother? Or is it that the girls aren't playing merrily enough?" asked a voice.

"Wonderful tunes they're playing. Never heard anything like them in our village," said the man who had burst into the blindage, laughing.

"Och! Vasin doesn't like shells! No, he doesn't!" said one of the men lying in the aristocratic corner.

"Well, when you must, it's quite another story!" said Vasin in a slow drawl, at the sound of which all the others fell silent. "On the 24th, why, there was some fireworks, at least; but to be blown to blazes for nothing! The chiefs won't thank us for that!"

Everybody burst out laughing at this.

"There's that Melnikov. I suppose he's still outside," someone said.

"Better send him in, otherwise he will be killed for nothing," said the grey-haired gunner.

"Who's this Melnikov?" asked Volodia.

"Oh, one of our men, Your Honour. He's a bit daft. Not afraid of anything, and he stays outside all the time. You have a look at him. He's just like a bear!"

"He knows a charm," came Vasin's ponderous voice from another corner.

Melnikov came into the blindage. He was stout (very rare among the soldiers), redheaded and red-faced, and had an enormous bulging forehead and bright blue bulging eyes.

"Aren't you afraid of the shells?" Volodia asked him.

"What's there to be afraid of?" answered Melnikov, shrugging his shoulders and scratching himself. "I won't be killed by shells, I know that!"

"Would you like to live here?"

"That I would. It's jolly here!" answered Melnikov with a sudden burst of laughter.

"They ought to take him out on a sortie. I'll tell the general, shall I?" said Volodia, although he was not acquainted with a single general.

"Why not? Tell him, by all means!"

Melnikov hid himself among the rest of the men.

"Let's play a game of 'flips'! Who's got any cards?" he was heard hurriedly enquiring.

Soon a game was started in the back corner and the sound of the flipping of the noses of losers, laughter and the snap of cards were heard. Volodia drank tea from the samovar which the drummer had made for him, treated the gunners to some, joked and talked with them in the desire to make himself popular, and was very pleased with the respect they showed him. The men, seeing that the gentleman put on no *airs*, began to talk without restraint. One expressed an opinion as to how soon the state of siege in Sevastopol would come to an end and said that a reliable sailor he knew had told him that *Kistentin*,* the Tsar's brother, was coming to our relief with the 'Merican fleet; and he also said that an arrangement would be made soon that there should be no firing for two weeks so as to give everybody a rest, and that if anybody fired they would be fined seventy-five copecks for every shot.

Vasin, who, as Volodia was able to see, was a little fellow with large, kindly eyes and side whiskers, related, at first amidst general silence and then amidst laughter, how on arriving home on furlough everybody had been glad to see him at first, but that later his father sent him out to work, and the forester's assistant kept sending his carriage for his, Vasin's wife. All this amused Volodia very much. Far from feeling fear or discomfort in this crowded and stuffy blindage, he felt quite at ease and pleased with everything.

* Constantine.

Many of the men were already snoring. Vlang was also lying stretched out on the floor, and the grey-haired gunner, after spreading out his coat, was mumbling his prayers before going to sleep when Volodia felt an urge to go and see what was happening outside.

"Draw your feet in!" the men shouted to each other as soon as he rose, and feet were drawn in to make room for him.

Vlang, who had seemed fast asleep, suddenly raised his head and seized Volodia by the skirt of his coat.

"Don't go! Please—you mustn't!" he implored in a tearful, persuasive tone. "You don't know what it's like—the shells keep raining down all the time. Better stay here. . . ."

Notwithstanding Vlang's pleading, Volodia picked his way out of the blindage and settled himself on the doorstep where he found Melnikov changing his boots.

The air felt fresh and pure, especially after the stuffy blindage, and the night was clear and still. Above the boom of gunfire could be heard the creaking of the wheels of carts bringing in gabions, and the hum of voices of the men working in the powder magazines. High overhead was the starry sky, streaked with the endless fiery tracks of flying shells; on the left, a small opening led to another blindage, in which he could see the feet and backs of the sailors living there, and hear their drunken voices; in front loomed the powder magazine, past which flitter the crouching figures of men, and on which, under a hail of bullets and shells which was exceptionally thick here, stood a tall figure in a black greatcoat, his hands in his pockets, stamping down with his feet the earth which other men were bringing up in sacks. Often a shell flew past with a screech and burst quite close to the magazine. The men carrying the sacks ducked or darted to the side, but the black figure remained unmoved and coolly continued to stamp down the earth with his feet without changing position or pose.

"Who is that dark fellow up there?" Volodia asked Melnikov.

"I don't know. I'll go and see."

"Don't go, there's no need."

But Melnikov, paying no heed, got up, walked over to the black figure and stood next to him for a long time as motionless and unperturbed as the other.

"It's the powder magazine man, Your Honour!" he said on returning. "The magazine was hit by a shell, so the infantrymen are taking up some earth."

From time to time, a shell flew over, seemingly straight at the blindage door.

Volodia would then crouch behind a corner and peep out again to see if any more were coming. Although Vlang pleaded with Volodia several times from the blindage to go inside, the latter sat on the doorstep for three hours, finding a strange pleasure in challenging fate and watching the flight of the shells. Towards the end of the evening he already knew whence so many guns were firing and where their shells were dropping.

Early the next morning, on the 27th, after ten hours sleep, Volodia, refreshed and in excellent spirits, stepped out onto the doorstep of the blindage. Vlang wanted to go out with him, but at the very first sound of firing, he tumbled back, head over heels, into the blindage, to the general amusement of the men, most of whom had come out to get a breath of fresh air. Vasin, the grey-haired gunner, and a few others were the only ones who rarely issued from the dugout; the other men could not be restrained: all poured out of the stuffy blindage into the fresh morning air, and disregarding the bombardment, which was as intense as it had been the day before, settled themselves

on the doorstep or below the parapet of the breastwork. Melnikov had been strolling about the batteries since daybreak, gazing unperturbed into the sky.

Two elderly soldiers and a young curly-headed one of Jewish appearance were sitting near the doorstep. The latter picked up a stray bullet, flattened it with a shell fragment upon a stone and began to carve it with a knife into the shape of the St. George's Cross. The others, talking together, watched him at his work. The cross was really turning out very beautifully.

"If we stay here for any length of time, when peace comes our time will be up," said one of the elder men.

"Of course! I had only four years more to serve and I've been in Sevastopol for five months."

"That doesn't count for discharge," said the other man.

Just then a shell screeched over their heads and hit the ground about two feet away from Melnikov, who was striding down the trench towards them.

"Nearly killed Melnikov," said one.

"It can't kill me," said Melnikov.

"Well, here's a Cross for your valour," said the young soldier who had carved the cross, handing it to Melnikov.

"No, brother, out here a month counts for a year—an order's been issued about it," said one, resuming the conversation.

"Whichever way it is, as soon as peace is declared the Tsar will hold a review in Warsaw, and if we don't get our discharge we'll certainly get unlimited furlough."

At that moment a bullet whistled right over their heads and flattened itself against a stone.

"Look out, you'll be getting a *clean* discharge before the day's out," said one of the men.

Loud guffaws followed this remark.

Not only before the day was out, but two hours later two of the men did get a *clean* discharge and five more were wounded; but the others kept up their banter just the same.

By morning the two mortars were indeed repaired sufficiently well to enable them to be fired. At about 10 a.m., on receiving orders from the bastion commander, Volodia called out his men and marched them to the battery.

No sooner did they set to work, than all signs of fear they had betrayed the day before completely vanished. Vlang alone was unable to control himself; he crouched and ran for cover just as before; and Vasin too lost his nerve and kept fidgeting and squatting. Volodia, however, was bubbling over with enthusiasm. All thought of danger had vanished from his mind. His joy at the knowledge that he was performing his duties well and that, far from being a coward, he was actually brave, and his sense of power in the presence of these twenty men who, he knew, were watching him with keen interest, had transformed him into a gallant soldier. He became vain with his bravery, swaggered in front of the men, climbed onto the banquette and even unbuttoned his coat in order to be more conspicuous. Much as he had become accustomed to bravery in every form during the eight months he had served here, the commander of the bastion, who just then was making his round of *his estate*, as he called it, could not help admiring the good-looking boy in the unbuttoned coat under which was visible a red shirt that fitted round his white, soft neck, and who with flushed face and sparkling eyes was clapping his hands and commanding in a ringing voice: "First! Second!" and scrambling blithely up the breastwork to see where his shells had dropped. At half past eleven the firing ceased on both sides and at 12 sharp the assault on Malakhov Kurgan, of its 2nd, 3rd and 5th bastions, began.

On this side of the bay, between Inkerman and the Severnaya fortifications, two naval men were standing on the telegraph hill—one, an officer, who was surveying Sevastopol through a telescope, and the other, who had just arrived at the big sign post with a Cossack. It was about the hour of noon.

The sun stood high and bright over the bay, the water of which sparkled warmly and merrily around the ships lying at anchor while the sailing and rowing boats flitted across its surface. A light breeze barely rustled the leaves of the withering oak thicket near the telegraph, filling the sails of the boats and rippling the surface of the water. Sevastopol, the same as ever, with its half-built church, colonnade, quays, the green boulevard on the hillside and fine library building, its little azure inlets cluttered with masts, picturesque arches of the water mains and blue clouds of gunpowder smoke, lit up every now and again by the lurid flashes of gunfire; Sevastopol, beautiful, festive and proud as ever, bounded by yellow, smoking hills on one side and by the bright-blue sea glistening in the sunshine on the other—could be seen across the bay. Long white clouds, forecasting wind, floated over the horizon, against which a ribbon of black smoke from some ship curled its way up into the sky. Along the entire line of the fortifications, and especially the hills on the left side, puffs of thick, compact, white smoke constantly appeared, sometimes in clusters, accompanied by lightning flashes that were brilliant even in the daytime, and assuming diverse shapes as they spread, rose to the sky where they took on a darker hue. The puffs of smoke, appearing now here and now there, broke out on the hills, in the enemy batteries, in the city, and high in the sky. The sounds of explosions were continuous and, re-echoing, they rent the air....

Towards noon the puffs appeared less often and the air did not quiver so much from the roar.

"The 2nd Bastion had stopped answering the enemy's fire," said the Hussar officer seated on his horse. "It's smashed up entirely. Terrible!"

"Yes, and Malakhov Kurgan seems to be sending over one to their three," the man at the telescope replied. "Their silence makes me furious. There! Another has hit the Kornilov redoubt and they're not answering."

"Didn't I say they always stopped bombarding around about noon? It's the same today. Let's go and have lunch... they're waiting for us...there's nothing more to see here now."

"Wait! Don't hinder me!" replied the man at the telescope, peering at Sevastopol with exceptional intensity.

"What's the matter? What do you see there?"

"A movement in the trenches. Dense columns."

"That's right, I can see them without glasses," said the naval officer. "They're marching in columns. We'd better give the signal."

"Look, look! They've left the trenches!"

And indeed, even with the naked eye dark patches could be seen moving downhill through the ravine from the French batteries to the bastions. Several dark strips in front of those patches had almost reached our lines. White puffs of smoke broke out over the bastions at different spots as if they were racing along them. The wind carried the sounds of rapid musketry fire, like the drumming of raindrops on a window pane. The black strips moved into the smoke and drew nearer and nearer. The sounds of firing grew louder and louder, and merged into one continuous reverberating roar. The smoke, rising more and more often, quickly spread over the lines and finally merged in a single, purple, billowing cloud, in which.

here and there, lights flashed and black specks were visible—all the sounds merged in a reverberating crash.

"An assault!" said the officer with pallid face, making way for the naval officer at the telescope.

Cossacks came galloping down the road; officers rode past on horseback; the Commander-in-Chief rolled past in his carriage, escorted by his Staff. Signs of intense agitation and anticipation of impending disaster were visible in every face.

"They can't have captured it!" said the officer.

"A flag! By God! Look! Look!" said the other, panting and stepping away from the telescope. "The French flag is flying over Malakhov!"

"It can't be!"

25

Just before dawn Kozeltsov Senior, who, in the course of the night, had managed to win back his money and lose it again—including the gold coin he had sewn in the cuff of his coat—was still immersed in an unsound, heavy but deep sleep in the defence barracks of the 5th Bastion when the sinister cry, echoed by various voices, rang out:

"Alarm! . . ."

"Mikhailo Semyonich! They've launched an assault!" He heard somebody shout: "Wake up!"

"Some schoolboy up to his tricks, I suppose," he muttered, opening his eyes and still not believing what he had heard.

But suddenly he saw an officer with a pale and frightened face darting backwards and forwards with no apparent purpose and at once realized what had happened. The thought that he might be taken for a coward who did not want to join his company at a critical moment struck him with terrific force. He ran to the company as fast as his legs could carry him. The gunfire had ceased; but the musketry fire was at its height. The bul-

lets came over not singly, like *Stutzers*, but in flocks, like birds in the autumn flying in the sky. A curtain of smoke enveloped the place which his battalion had occupied the day before, and discordant cries and shouts were heard. Soldiers, wounded and sound, passed him in batches. Running another thirty paces, he saw his company hugging the wall, and the face of one of his soldiers, deathly pale and frightened. The other faces looked the same.

The feeling of terror communicated itself to Kozeltsov as well—he felt a cold shiver run down his spine.

"They've taken the Schwartz Redoubt!" said a young officer, whose teeth were chattering. "All is lost!"

"Nonsense," Kozeltsov snapped angrily, and wishing to rouse himself with a gesture, he drew his short, iron, blunt sword and shouted:

"Forward, lads! Hurra-a-a-ah!"

Kozeltsov's voice was so loud and ringing that it had a rousing effect upon himself. He dashed down the traverse; about fifty men followed him, shouting as they ran. When they reached the end of the traverse and came out on an open space, bullets poured down literally like hail. Two of them hit him, but where they had hit him, and what injury they had caused—a contusion or a wound—he had no time to ascertain. Ahead, in the smoke, he could discern bluecoats and red pantaloons, and hear cries that were not Russian; a Frenchman was standing on the breastwork, shouting and waving his sword. Kozeltsov was certain he would be killed and it was this that lent him courage. On and on he ran. Several soldiers overtook him, others suddenly appeared from the side and also ran forward. The bluecoats kept their previous distance, running away from him back to their trenches, but he stumbled over the bodies of killed and wounded. When he reached the outer ditch everything became blurred in his eyes and he felt a pain in the chest;

he sat down on a banquette and through an embrasure saw to his delight crowds of bluecoats running in disorder back to their trenches, and prostrate bodies of dead men and crawling wounded in red pantaloons and blue coats scattered all over the field.

Half an hour later he was lying on a stretcher near the Niko-layevsky Barracks and knew that he was wounded, but he hardly felt any pain: all he wanted was something cold to drink and to lie down more comfortably.

A short, stout surgeon with bushy black side whiskers came up and unbuttoned his coat. Looking down his nose Kozeltsov watched the doctor do something to his wound, and studied his face, but still he felt no pain. The doctor replaced the shirt over his wound, wiped his fingers on the hem of his coat and without saying a word or glancing at the wounded man, turned to another patient. Kozeltsov mechanically followed with his eyes what was going on in front of him. Recalling what had happened at the 5th Bastion, he was greatly comforted and cheered at the thought that he had performed his duty well, that for the first time during the entire period of his service he had done the best that the circumstances had permitted and that he had nothing to reproach himself with. The surgeon, dressing the wound of another officer, said something to a priest with a long red beard who was standing near holding a cross, and pointed at Kozeltsov.

"Am I going to die?" Kozeltsov asked the priest, when the latter came up to him.

The priest did not answer, but uttered a prayer and gave the wounded man the cross.

Kozeltsov was not frightened at the thought of death. He grasped the cross in his feeble hands, pressed it to his lips and broke into tears.

"Have the French been dislodged at all points?" he asked the priest in a firm voice.

"Victory is ours at all points," replied the priest with an accent on his "o's," concealing from the wounded man the fact that the French flag was already flying over Malakhov Kurgan.

"Thank God, thank God!" said the wounded man, oblivious of the tears streaming down his cheeks, and moved to inexpressible emotion at the thought that he had performed a heroic deed.

The thought of his brother flashed through his mind. "God grant that he be as fortunate," he prayed.

26

But a different fate awaited Volodia. He was listening to a story Vasin was telling him when shouts of "the French are coming!" rose from all sides. The blood rushed back to Volodia's heart for a moment and he felt his cheeks turn cold and pale.

For a second he remained transfixed, but glancing round he saw the soldiers calmly button their greatcoats and file out of the dugout; one of them—he thought it was Melnikov—even remarked jocularly:

"Let's meet them with bread and salt, lads!"

Volodia, together with *Vlanka*, who never left his side, emerged from the blindage and made for the battery. The artillery on both sides was silent. It was not so much the men's coolness as the pitiful, unconcealed cowardice of the cadet that bucked Volodia up. "Can I really be like him?" he asked himself as he ran cheerfully to the breastwork where his little mortars were posted. From here he could clearly see the Frenchmen running across the open field towards the bastion and numbers of them were swarming in the nearest trenches, their bayonets glistening in the sun. One of them, a little, broad-shouldered fellow in a Zouave uniform and carrying a sword, was running



on in front leaping over the shell holes. "Load grape-shot!" Volodia commanded, running down the banquette; but the men had already attended to that without waiting for orders and at the next command the metallic ring of discharged grape-shot resounded overhead, first from one mortar and then from another. "First! Second!" commanded Volodia, running from one mortar to the other through the smoke, totally oblivious to the danger. The rattle of musketry fire from our covering force and confused shouts were heard at close quarters on his flank.

Suddenly a piercing shriek of despair, repeated by several voices, came from the left: "They're outflanking us! They're outflanking us!" Volodia turned round at the shout and saw about twenty Frenchmen in his rear. One of them, a handsome fellow with a black beard and wearing a red fez, led the group, but on coming within ten paces of the battery he stopped, fired, and ran forward again. For a moment Volodia stood petrified; he could not believe his eyes. When he had pulled himself together and glanced round, he saw bluecoats in front of him

on the breastwork, and one of them had already jumped down and was spiking a gun. There was no one around him but Melnikov, who had been killed at his side by a bullet, and Vlang, who suddenly picked up a handspike and dashed forward with rolling eyes and a savage expression on his face. "Follow me, Vladimir Semyonich! Follow me! We're lost!" Vlang yelled desperately brandishing his handspike at the Frenchmen behind him. The latter were dumbfounded at the sight of the violent figure of the cadet. Vlang hit the one in front on the head, the others involuntarily halted. Continuing to glance over his shoulder, Vlang, shouting desperately: "Follow me, Vladimir Semyonich! What are you standing there for? Run!" made a dash for the trench where our infantry were firing at the French. No sooner had he leaped into the trench than his head popped up again to see what his beloved ensign was doing. Something in a greatcoat was lying prostrate on the spot where Volodia had been standing, and the whole place was now occupied by the French, who were shooting at our men.

27

Vlang found his battery in the second line of defence. Only eight of the twenty men of the mortar battery had survived.

Between eight and nine in the evening, Vlang and his battery were on board a steamer crowded with soldiers, cannon, horses and wounded men, which was crossing to the Severnaya Side. No firing was heard. The stars shone as brightly in the sky as they had the night before, but a strong wind was chopping the sea. Lightning flashes broke out on the ground in the 1st and 2nd bastions; explosions shook the air and lit up strange black objects and stones flying up into the sky. Something was burning near the docks and the water reflected the lurid flames. The bridge, teeming with people, was illumined.

by the conflagration on the Nikolayevsky Battery. A long tongue of flame seemed to tower motionless over the water at the distant promontory near the Alexandrov Battery, lighting up the cloud of smoke that was hovering above it; the same calm, challenging lights glimmered out at sea on the distant ships of the enemy fleet as they had done the night before. A fresh breeze ruffled the water of the bay. The glare of the conflagrations lit up the masts of the scuttled Russian ships, which were slowly sinking deeper and deeper into the water. Not a voice was heard on deck: above the regular sounds of parting waves and escaping steam were heard the snorting of horses and the beating of their hoofs on the deck, the captain's commands and the groans of the wounded. Vlang, who had eaten nothing all day, pulled a piece of bread out of his pocket and began to chew it, but suddenly he remembered Volodia and broke into such loud sobs that the soldiers near him heard.

"Look! Our Vlanga's eating and crying," said Vasin.

"That's funny!" said another.

"They've set fire to our barracks!" he continued, sighing. "How many of our lads lost their lives, but the French got it almost for nothing!"

"At least we've got away with our own lives. Thank the Lord for that," said Vasin.

"Still, it's a pity."

"What's a pity? D'you think they'll get a free run here? Not likely! We'll recapture it, you see! It don't matter how many of our men lose their lives, but as sure as God's in heaven, the Emperor'll give the command and we'll take it back. D'you think we'll let them have it? Not likely!" And addressing the French, as it were, he continued: "You can have the bare walls, but we've blown up all the trenches. . . . You may stick your flag up on the Kurgan, but don't dare poke your noses into the city! Wait, we'll square accounts with you yet—give us time."

"We certainly will!" said another emphatically.

All along the line of the Sevastopol bastions, which for so many months had been seething with extraordinarily vigorous life, which for so many months had seen heroes come and go, one after another, removed by death, and which for so many months had inspired the fear, hatred, and finally, the admiration of the enemy—the Sevastopol bastions were now deserted. All was dead, deserted, ghastly—but not quiet: everything was still undergoing destruction. The ground, ploughed up by fresh explosions, was strewn with shattered gun mountings, pinning down human corpses—Russian and enemy—heavy iron cannon now silenced for ever, hurled into pits with frightful force and half-buried by earth; shells, cannon balls, more corpses, pits, shattered logs, blindages, and again corpses in grey and blue greatcoats. And all this was often disturbed again and lit up by the lurid glare of explosions that continued to rend the air.

The enemy saw that something inexplicable was taking place in grim Sevastopol. The explosions and the deathly silence on the bastions made them shudder; but they dared not believe, remembering the cool and stern resistance they had met with that day, that their dauntless foe had vanished, and they waited with suspense and trepidation for the end of this gloomy night.

The Sevastopol army, heaving and tossing like the sea on a dark stormy night, contracting and stretching and shivering with alarm down the whole length of its body, swaying to and fro on the shore of the bay, the bridge and the Severnaya Side, moved slowly in a solid mass away from the place where it had left so many of its courageous brothers, away from the place that was all drenched with its blood, away from the place which, for eleven months, it had held against a foe twice its strength and was now ordered to abandon without a fight.

The first reaction of every soldier to this order was one of bewilderment and pain. The second was one of fear of pur-



suit. The moment the men left the places where they had been accustomed to fight, they felt defenceless and they huddled frightened in the dark at the foot of the bridge, which swayed in the powerful wind. Clicking their bayonets as they jostled each other, the infantry pushed on, regiments, vehicles and militia; mounted officers carrying dispatches pushed their way through the seething crowds; inhabitants and orderlies carrying baggage wept and pleaded to be allowed to pass; the artillery with clattering wheels, pushed its way to the shore, hurrying to get away. Notwithstanding their various preoccupations, the instinct of self-preservation and the desire to get away from this grim scene of death as soon as possible were uppermost in everybody's mind. This was felt equally by the mortally wounded soldier lying among five hundred others on the stone floor of the Pavlovsky Quay and entreating Heaven to send him release, by the militiaman who, with all his might was pressing into this solid mass of humanity to make way for a general

on horseback, by the general who was firmly controlling the crossing and restraining the haste of the soldiers, by the sailor who had been caught up by a moving battalion and was having the breath crushed out of him by the swaying crowd, by the wounded officer borne on a stretcher by four soldiers who were forced to stop and lower the stretcher to the ground at the Nikolayevsky battery, by the artilleryman who had served at his gun for sixteen years and was now, by an order from above which he could not understand, with the aid of his comrades, pushing his gun over the steep cliff into the bay, and by the sailors who, after scuttling their ships, were now vigorously rowing away from them in their longboats. On stepping off at the other end of the bridge nearly every soldier took off his cap and crossed himself. But at the back of this feeling of relief there was another, oppressive, aching and more profound feeling, akin to penitence, shame and anger. Nearly every soldier, on looking back at abandoned Sevastopol from Severnaya Side, heaved an inexpressibly bitter sigh and shook his fist at the enemy.

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St. Petersburg

